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Index to volume 75

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Index to volume 75

Compiled by Mrs N. D. Blamire

Entries are in single list with reference to:

(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1980', but excluding those in 'Recent reports', 'News and comment', requests and reviews;

(2) scientific nomenclature under generic names only and following *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978);

(3) authors of all papers, notes, reviews and letters, and photographers; papers are referred to by their titles, other contributions as 'note on', 'review of', etc.;

(4) a few subject headings, i.e. 'Announcements', 'Breeding', 'Display', 'Editorials', 'Field characters', 'Food', 'Migration', 'News and comment', 'Obituaries', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recorders', 'Recent reports', 'Requests', 'Roosting' and 'Voice';

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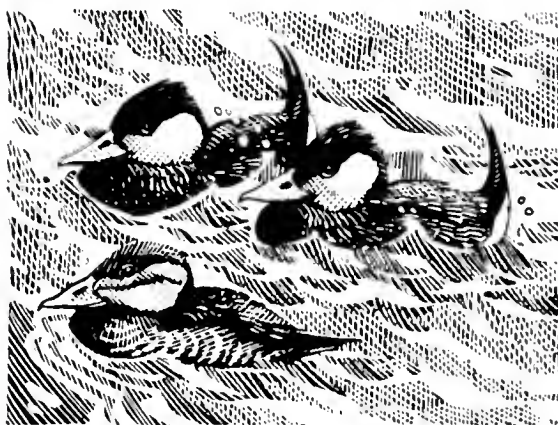
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Movements of Ruddy Ducks during the hard winter of 1978/79



K. E. Vinicombe and R. J. Chandler

Since the first escaped Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* bred in Britain in 1960 (King 1976), they have undergone a phenomenal population expansion. In an earlier review of their status, Hudson (1976) estimated a population growth of 25% per annum and, at that time (winter 1975/76), the British population was probably in the region of 375 individuals. The main breeding areas were in the western Midlands, along the Welsh border and in Cheshire, with most wintering on four reservoirs in Avon and Staffordshire. Since then, the increase has continued unabated; they bred in Northern Ireland in 1974 (Sharrock 1976), on Anglesey, Gwynedd, in 1978 (Dr P. J. Dare *in litt.*) and in Scotland in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 492), while a pair was discovered in Belgium in November 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 257). Hudson, however, questioned the possible effects of a severe winter on their numbers. Early in its colonisation of Britain, the Ruddy Duck survived one of the coldest winters this century (1962/63), but immediately before that winter it numbered only six pairs, about four pairs of which survived, so what effects a severe winter would have on a well-established feral population was unclear. Winter 1978/79 was the coldest since 1962/63, but its effects on resident British birds were less great, owing to regular intermittent lapses in the cold; nevertheless, the severe freezing provided some large-scale influxes of Continental waterfowl and the freezing of most inland waters presented the Ruddy Ducks with their greatest challenge for 16 years.

Methods

In an earlier paper, Chandler (1981) analysed the large influxes of Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* and other waterfowl during winter 1978/79. While obtaining his data, he also received a large number of Ruddy Duck records from areas where they do not usually occur. Additional information was obtained from the Wildfowl Trust duck counts, from various county recorders and individual birders. Thus, a fairly complete picture has been obtained, despite the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to monitor the British Ruddy Duck population as it grows and expands into new areas. The inevitable gaps and omissions in our data are, however, unlikely to have obscured the general pattern to any significant degree.

The format of this paper is similar to that of Chandler (1981). England and Wales have been split into a number of arbitrary areas (differing slightly from those used by Chandler), in order to maximise the differences between breeding/wintering areas and areas where Ruddy Ducks do not normally occur:

'Normal' areas

NORTHWEST Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire *plus* Clwyd and Gwynedd, including Anglesey (Ruddy Ducks generally occur only in the south of this region)

NORTH MIDLANDS Shropshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, but *excluding* Staffordshire

STAFFORDSHIRE (treated separately)

AVON *plus* Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset (referred to just as 'Avon')

'Extralimital' areas

NORTHEAST Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham, Cleveland, North, West and South Yorkshire, Humberside

EAST Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex

1. First-winter male Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, March 1978
(David Tomlinson)



SOUTH MIDLANDS Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, but *excluding* Greater London
 SOUTHEAST Surrey, Kent, East and West Sussex, *plus* Greater London
 SOUTH Gloucestershire, Somerset (*excluding* Cheddar Reservoir), Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight
 SOUTHWEST Devon and Cornwall
 SOUTH WALES Dyfed, Powys, West, Mid and South Glamorgan, Gwent
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Ruddy Ducks away from the usual wintering areas in the Northwest, the North Midlands, Staffordshire and Avon are termed 'extralimital'. A source of bias in the data is the monthly Wildfowl Trust duck counts, which will tend to produce the maximum numbers in mid-month (the relevant dates were: 17th December 1978, 14th January, 18th February and 18th March 1979); while this will affect the absolute numbers, it will not necessarily affect the general pattern.

Weather

For a detailed analysis of the weather during winter 1978/79, see Chandler (1981). The main periods of cold will be summarised at the beginning of each of the ensuing sectional analyses.

Movements in a normal winter

During normal winters, the majority of British Ruddy Ducks gather on four reservoirs: Blithfield and Belvide Reservoirs in Staffordshire and Blagdon and Chew Valley Lakes in Avon. Smaller numbers winter elsewhere; the newly formed Anglesey population (13-16 individuals in 1978/79, Dr P. J. Dare *in litt.*) and the Leicestershire birds appear to be discrete, while small numbers also remain in Cheshire, Shropshire and a few other areas (Hudson 1976). In a normal winter, numbers in Avon and Staffordshire build up from early autumn (the first may arrive in Avon in late August) and generally reach a peak between late December and February. In Avon, numbers generally decline during February and March (the spring moult is discussed below) with only a few lingering in early April, while, in Staffordshire, numbers usually decline from mid February to late April (D. Smallshire *in litt.*). As suggested by Hudson, the Avon Ruddy Ducks arrive direct from their breeding areas farther north (the Avon breeding population, contrary to widespread belief, is small: up to six pairs at Chew, with successful breeding erratic). There seems to be relatively little onward movement from Staffordshire to Avon during the winter, but it is inevitable that at least some must occur.

It is notable how the Ruddy Ducks are faithful to relatively few waters in winter. Shallow impounded valley reservoirs are favoured, and concrete-sided reservoirs in particular are shunned; in Avon and Somerset, Ruddy Ducks are comparatively rare on Barrow Gurney and Cheddar Reservoirs (ones and twos at most) despite the closeness of these sites to the two main waters; Chasewater in the Midlands is similarly avoided. Ruddy Ducks feed primarily on insect larvae and aquatic plant seeds, by straining the ooze on lake bottoms (Cramp & Simmons 1977); presumably, the 'concrete bowl' reservoirs either fail to provide the right conditions or, more probably, are too deep to enable efficient feeding.

Movements in winter 1978/79

December 1978: normal winter build-ups

After a cold start, December 1978 was mild until 16th when a high pressure area moved east across the British Isles. Snow occurred in southeast England on 20th, but it remained relatively mild in the south until 30th.

So far as the Ruddy Ducks were concerned, December 1978 was unexceptional. About 768 were estimated in total during the two-week period 11th-24th December, all but seven of these in their usual areas (table 1). The majority had arrived on the four main reservoirs, with 238 in Staffordshire (200 on Blithfield and 38 on Belvide) and 323 in Avon (217 on Chew and 106 on Blagdon). There were still some 112 in the Northwest, with 80 on Combermere, Cheshire, on 17th and at least 88 were reported in the North Midlands, with 43 around Ellesmere, Shropshire, and 34 on Swithland Reservoir, Leicestershire. Ten extralimitals were reported during December, from Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Kent, West Sussex and in Ireland, at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford (K. Preston *in litt.*).

Table 1. Estimated regional totals of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in Britain and Ireland in 1978/79.

(a) before the cold weather; (b), (c) & (d) during the three main cold spells; and (e) after the cold weather.

	(a) 11th-24th December	(b) 1st-14th January	(c) 22nd Jan- 4th Feb	(d) 12th-25th February	(e) 12th Mar- 1st Apr
<i>'Normal' areas</i>					
STAFFORDSHIRE (total)	238	265	72	56	156
Blithfield	200	200	70	50	50
Belvide	38	24	2	0	47
Elsewhere	0	41	0	6	59
AVON (total)	323	235	310+	349+	309
Chew	217	18	59	45	278
Blagdon	106	110	22	90+	30
Barrow Gurney	0	77	160+	8	0
Cheddar (Somerset)	0	28	68	206	1
Elsewhere	0	2	1	0	0
NORTHWEST	112	69	93	112	97
NORTH MIDLANDS	88+	78	39	65	55
<i>'Extralimital' areas</i>					
NORTHEAST	0	1	0	0	0
EAST	1	6	8	6	3
SOUTH MIDLANDS	2	10	9	10	1
SOUTHEAST	3	34	27	19	7
SOUTH	0	2	16	21	4
SOUTHWEST	0	11	14	16	0
SOUTH WALES	0	5	8	15	1
IRELAND	1	1	3	1	1
<i>'Normal' areas</i>	761	647	514	582	617
<i>'Extralimital' areas</i>	7	70	85	88	17
TOTAL	768	717	599	670	634

1st-21st January: the first freeze and the Avon dispersal

In northern Britain, it turned cold around Christmas, with heavy snow on 28th December, reaching the south by 30th. The cold was associated with a high pressure area over Scandinavia, giving rise to easterly winds. Many waters partially or completely froze around this time. Cold spells and milder spells then succeeded each other, a pattern which was to become something of a feature of the winter's weather. Subsequent cold periods occurred during 10th-13th and 17th-19th January.

The initial cold spell of 1979 had a profound effect on the Ruddy Ducks in every area except Staffordshire. Numbers at Blithfield and Belvide remained virtually constant from mid December until the middle of January when there were still about 200 on Blithfield and 24 on Belvide. There was obviously enough ice-free water to induce them to stay, but a flock of 41 which appeared briefly on Chasewater, Staffordshire/West Midlands, on 4th probably indicated some temporary dispersal.

It seems that the first major movement of Ruddy Ducks in 1979 originated almost exclusively from Avon. Chew Valley Lake was almost completely frozen; the water level was very low, about 4 m below top level, so the unusually shallow lake was particularly susceptible to freezing. Blagdon was also frozen, but, as it is slightly deeper than Chew, it was somewhat less severely affected. The Ruddy Ducks (and other waterfowl) were therefore forced to disperse; numbers at Chew plummeted from 289 on 28th December to only seven on 7th January, with dispersion to Blagdon (up to 110), Barrow Gurney Reservoirs (77) and Cheddar Reservoir (28) in mid month; two also appeared on the murky waters of the Severn Estuary. On 20th January, however, during an intermittent thaw, some 150 returned to Chew and numbers on other nearby reservoirs around that time indicated an area-total of 259, suggesting that some 82 had in fact left completely. The rapid returns to Chew and Blagdon during the intermittent thaws became a regular feature of the winter's movements.

Following the ten extralimital Ruddy Ducks in December 1978, there were about 70 such records in the first two weeks of 1979 (table 1). Almost half of these appeared in the Southeast, with about 30 recorded from 6th January, including up to 13 at Staines Reservoir, Surrey, and at least three in Kent. Perhaps more interesting, however, was an influx of at least 11 into Devon and Cornwall, including a party of five on Drift Reservoir, Cornwall, from 6th. A female or immature at Porthellick, St Mary's, on 5th-6th, moving to Tresco by 26th, was the first record for the Isles of Scilly. This record clearly indicated the full extent of the movement and one wonders whether any might have reached the Continent or simply disappeared out into the Atlantic. A Coot *Fulica atra* ringed at Chew on 11th August 1978 was recovered near the France/Spain border on 11th January 1979 (R. B. H. Smith *in litt.*) illustrating just how far some of the Chew waterfowl dispersed to escape the cold. Smaller numbers of Ruddy Ducks reached the Northeast (one in South Yorkshire), the East (six), the South Midlands (ten), the South (six) and South Wales (five).

Movements in the Northwest and the North Midlands were complicated and more difficult to interpret in detail. The first signs of displacement

occurred somewhat earlier than in the south, with a male at Hilbre Island in the Dee Estuary, Merseyside, on 28th December, followed by four other appearances in Merseyside over the next few days. It is probable that these birds came from Cheshire, where it seems that the scattered wintering population was forced to congregate on the few remaining open waters (J. P. Guest *in litt.*). Rostherne Mere became the main focal point as it is very deep and therefore less susceptible to freezing than other lakes in the area. Numbers rose there from three in mid December to 18 on 5th January and 35 on 14th. More interesting, however, was the appearance of small numbers at the Weaver Bend, River Mersey, Cheshire, reaching a maximum of 17 on 15th January. Also around this time, Ruddy Ducks began to appear at Winsford Bottom Flash, Cheshire, with two on 14th and 13 on 20th; this locality was to attract high numbers in February.

Movements in the North Midlands similarly reflected a dispersal to open water. In Shropshire, 44 at Ellesmere on 7th January decreased to only two by 14th, but elsewhere small numbers appeared at a number of localities, the highest totals being at Chelmarsh Reservoir, Shropshire (14), Draycote Reservoir, Warwickshire (13), Rutland Water, Leicestershire (15), and Foremark Reservoir, Derbyshire (19), from 6th-15th. Some may have left the area completely in the second and third weeks of January, but this exodus seems to have been due largely to the disappearance of the Ellesmere flock.

22nd January to 11th February: the Staffordshire exodus

On 23rd January, the easterly winds turned northerly and there was further heavy snow, particularly in the south. The cold weather continued for the remainder of the month, although early February was rather more variable. It should be noted that, as there was no Wildfowl Trust duck count in this period, only about 599 Ruddy Ducks can be accounted for, compared with 717 in early January.

South Staffordshire experienced its main freeze-up on the night of 26th/27th January, when, in very calm conditions, the temperature fell to about -9°C (D. Smallshire *in litt.*). This had a profound effect on the Ruddy Ducks; numbers at Blithfield plummeted from 200 during 12th-14th January to only 70 on 28th, while at Belvide only two remained on 27th and one of these succumbed to two Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* after crippling itself trying to land on the ice (D. Smallshire *in litt.*). None returned to Belvide until 28th February; it is not clear how many stayed at Blithfield, though very few (perhaps 50-70) would seem to have been present. It appears therefore that some 152 Ruddy Ducks left Staffordshire in the late January freeze.

As might be expected, the largest number apparently moved south to Avon, though this was very much a case of 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'! Numbers in Avon increased by at least 51 during the last week of January, rising from 259 to 310. There were 59 at Chew and 22 at Blagdon, but the largest numbers were at least 160 at Barrow Gurney (27th) and 68 at Cheddar (28th), plus one on the Severn Estuary. It seems doubtful, however, whether the small reservoirs at Barrow Gurney could actually support all these birds, as they quickly dispersed at the first sign of a thaw,

with 119 reappearing at Chew on 4th February and 137 congregating at Cheddar by 8th; Cheddar, in fact, became the main locality throughout February.

The Northwest received a small influx, no doubt from Staffordshire. Rostherne Mere maintained its numbers, while at Winsford Bottom Flash the flock increased to 25 by 10th February. In the North Midlands, numbers declined by about ten, the small flocks at Draycote and Rutland Water being forced to seek alternative localities. Up to 21 continued to haunt Foremark Reservoir, while ten at Kingsbury Water Park, Warwickshire, and seven at Bartley Reservoir, West Midlands, no doubt originated from Blithfield and Belvide.

Extralimitals increased to about 85 (see table 1), but, with the Ruddy Ducks moving around and some probably having returned to their 'normal' areas, it is difficult to estimate the total actually involved in the new influx. Numbers declined slightly in the Southeast, but an influx of 14 in the South brought the regional total to 16. Notable occurrences included two in Lincolnshire, one in Norfolk, six at Loe Pool, Cornwall (probably involving the earlier ones from Drift Reservoir), and a single at Llys-y-fran Reservoir, Dyfed. Most notable, however, were three in southeast Ireland, at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 28th January (J. Fitzharris *in litt.*), no doubt including the earlier one first seen on 10th December.

12th February to 4th March: further cold weather movements

Easterly winds returned from 10th February with the development of another anticyclone over Scandinavia. Freezing conditions set in throughout Britain and there were gale-force easterly winds and heavy snow (especially in the Northeast and East, on 14th and 15th) producing the large invasion of Red-necked Grebes. The weather became warmer after 16th, but there was another sudden freeze on the night of 24th/25th, causing the overnight departure of many waterbirds.

The Midlands reservoirs remained severely frozen and no Ruddy Ducks were reported at Belvide on the duck count of 18th, but 50 were still present at Blithfield on 24th-25th. In Avon, numbers rose by some 39, to reach 349 on 24th-25th, with 45 at Chew, at least 90 at Blagdon, eight at Barrow Gurney and no less than 206 at Cheddar. In the Northwest, up to 37 remained at Rostherne and the gathering at Winsford Bottom Flash reached 60 on 24th. Numbers on Anglesey increased by three, while a male appeared in the Conwy Estuary, Gwynedd, on 18th. The North Midlands also experienced an influx; the largest flocks were 17 still at Foremark Reservoir and 14 at Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, on 24th-25th.

The extralimital records increased to 88 (see table 1 for regional dispersal). Numbers in the Southeast decreased to 19, but nearly all the other areas recorded further small influxes. Notable occurrences included two on the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire/Norfolk, one in Suffolk, one in Essex and two at Lade, Kent. Up to 12 were counted at Radipole Lake, Dorset, seven at Slapton Ley, Devon, seven at Loe Pool, Cornwall, and eight at Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, Mid Glamorgan. Another notable occurrence involved five seen on the sea at Blackpill, West Glamorgan, on 22nd-23rd February.

5th March to 1st April: the spring moult and the return to the breeding pools

After the first few days of March, the weather was less cold, apart from further snow on 15th and 16th; it was milder from 19th, with southerly weather predominating.

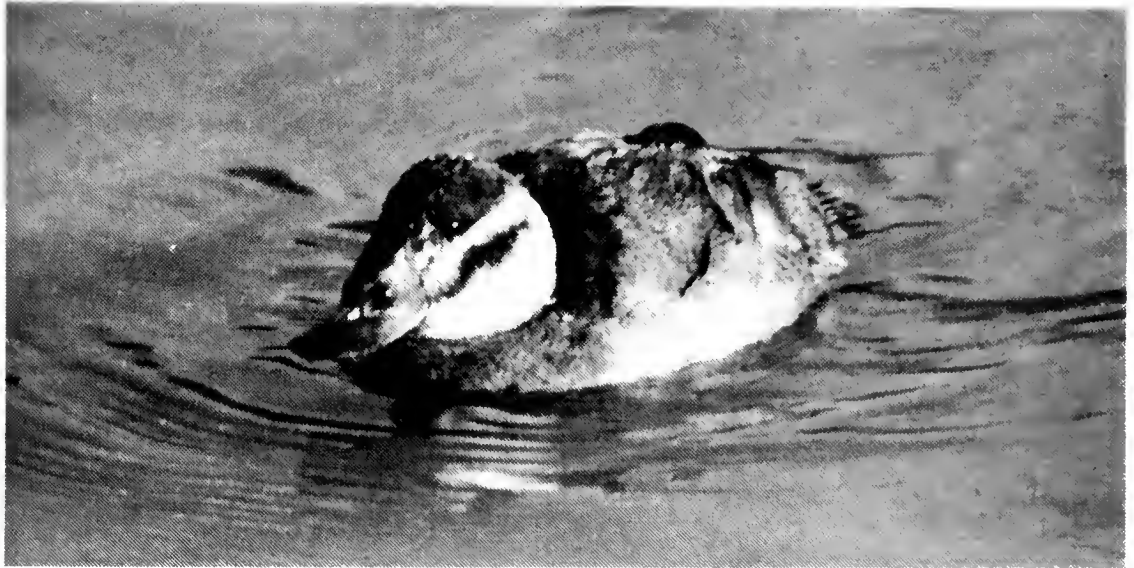
The Ruddy Duck is unusual in that it undergoes a complete moult twice a year, with the flight feathers moulted simultaneously in about March to April (Cramp & Simmons 1977). What happens to the British Ruddy Ducks during their spring moult is not entirely clear. In Avon, numbers are generally split between Blagdon and Chew during the winter, but in late February and early March there is a tendency for them to gather mainly on one or the other reservoir, with a gradual departure during March after they have grown their new flight feathers. At Belvide, a spring moult gathering first appeared in 1976 and has been annual since, mainly between February and March, but with some occasionally lingering into April (D. Smallshire *in litt.*).

In both areas, it seems that the moult is staggered; some start to moult their body plumage as early as December, while at least some adults begin wing and tail moult in February. By late March, most adults have completed their moult, but first-years are still in heavy moult in late March and early April. The last to leave the winter quarters are therefore the immatures. While this pattern may be broadly true, it does appear that at least some leave the reservoirs and moult on the breeding pools. Presumably this asynchronised moult would have survival value should any part of the population meet with a catastrophe, such as a sudden late freeze, during the flightless period. Much more, however, is still to be learnt about the spring moult in this country.

2. Adult male Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Gwynedd, August 1981 (*R. J. Chandler*)



Following the complicated cold weather movements of January and February 1979, there was an abrupt return to Chew in early March. The 206 at Cheddar on 25th February declined to only 11 on 2nd March and only one after 4th, illustrating again the apparent dislike of 'concrete bowl' reservoirs. At Chew, numbers increased from 45 on 25th February to 249 on 4th March and a record 317 on 11th (55.5% males); 278 remained a week later and 223 were still present on 31st. There was then an abrupt departure, with only 25 in early April consisting of local breeders (about eight) plus some lingering winter visitors, mainly immatures still in moult. The 1979 moult occurred, therefore, mainly at Chew (only 30 remained at Blagdon) and was rather later and more contracted than in other recent years.



3. Female Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, June 1973 (D. W. Greenslade)

There was a similar return to Staffordshire, presumably to moult, with up to 59 at Belvide, 60 still at Blithfield and 59 elsewhere. As at Chew, the return to Belvide was abrupt, and the spring moult later than usual, with most staying into April and some remaining until the middle of May; dispersal from Blithfield occurred mainly in mid April. Numbers in Staffordshire suggest, however, that many returned to their natal areas to moult. A return to the breeding waters was in fact noted, the Northwest having 76 'new arrivals' in March, but, with them dispersing to the seclusion of the small reed-fringed breeding pools, the estimated area-total of about 100 must inevitably be an underestimate. In Cheshire, there was a total departure from Rostherne Mere, and the largest numbers returned to Radnor Mere (23), Tatton Mere (35) and Winsford Bottom Flash (22), which had been largely deserted in early March. Records of a similar return to the North Midlands are incomplete, but at least 34 'new arrivals' have come to light, including 18 at Shavington, Shropshire.

There was also an expected return of the extralimitals, their numbers declining from 88 in late February to 17 in mid March and only eight in the last week of the month. Five new extralimital records in March (including two in West Yorkshire) presumably related to birds heading north, rather than displacement by cold weather. One at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, from

mid March to mid April no doubt referred to one of the earlier birds from Lady's Island Lake. It was perhaps surprising that so few remained in their new localities to establish new breeding sites; this may suggest that many of the extralimitals were first-years. The only new records that have come to light were a pair which bred in East Sussex and a pair which one may assume attempted to do so in Greater London. Singles also occurred in Lincolnshire and Berkshire in mid May, while a pair summered at Radipole Lake, Dorset, but did not breed. A pair that appeared at Loch of Kinnordy, Angus, in early June (subsequently providing the first breeding record for Scotland) may have been lost or have 'overshot' following the earlier cold weather displacements in England.

Numbers involved in the 'extralimital' dispersal

The figure of 88 extralimital Ruddy Ducks during the period 12th-15th February obviously represents a minimum for the number involved in the movements, assuming that some of those involved in the January influxes made a premature return to their normal areas. By adding the regional maxima for the whole influx period (January-February), it would appear that up to 108 may have been involved; this figure is probably more representative of the total number involved in all the extralimital occurrences.

Mortality

About 13% of the December 1978 population could not be accounted for in February 1979. It is, of course, difficult to collate records for the whole country and it is most unlikely that every Ruddy Duck was seen and

4. Adult male and female Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, March 1978 (*David Tomlinson*)



reported. It seems likely, however, that a certain percentage of the Ruddy Ducks failed to survive the winter. The figure of 13% is perhaps too high, so we suggest that the loss was probably about 5-10%. This represents a high survival rate, considering (a) the difficult weather conditions, (b) the fact that the population has been established for only about 20 years, and (c) that the birds had little experience of the countryside away from Avon and the western Midlands. Whether they would do so well in a winter of the severity of 1962/63 is debatable, but it seems unlikely that such a winter would have any long-term effects on their numbers.

Conclusion

The events of winter 1978/79 have only reinforced the belief that the Ruddy Duck is here to stay, and it seems likely that it will not only continue to consolidate and spread in Britain but also eventually colonise and spread across Europe. In this respect, it is rather ironic that, while this introduced species thrives in the northwest, the native White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* struggles to maintain even a toe-hold on the opposite side of the continent.

Acknowledgments

We are extremely grateful to everyone who supplied records of Ruddy Ducks, especially the Wildfowl Trust for allowing the use of wildfowl count data. This paper would not have been written, however, without the detailed additional information supplied by Dr P. J. Dare, J. P. Guest and, in particular, D. Smallshire, who not only provided much of the data from the Midlands but also kindly criticised an earlier draft and provided much expert comment. A. H. Davis, J. Fitzharris, D. E. Ladhams, C. J. Newman, M. A. Ogilvie, K. Preston and D. Salmon are also thanked for their help in various ways.

Summary

Records of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in winter 1978/79 show the effects of a hard winter on the newly formed but rapidly expanding British feral population. In December 1978, about 768 Ruddy Ducks were gathered in their usual winter localities, with the majority in Avon and Staffordshire. Three main cold spells in January and February 1979 resulted in a widespread dispersal. Staffordshire was largely deserted, many moving to the Avon area; others, both from Avon and Staffordshire (as well as possibly some from the Northwest and the North Midlands), dispersed farther afield, providing records of about 100 mainly in southern England and south Wales, but including records in southern Ireland, the Isles of Scilly, and east to Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Ruddy Ducks in the Northwest and the North Midlands appeared mainly to seek out open water in their own respective areas.

Warmer weather in March induced a return to the usual areas to moult, followed by a return to the breeding waters. Figures suggest that perhaps 5-10% failed to survive the winter. In conclusion, it is suggested that the occasional severe winter will do little to halt the expansion of the population, which seems likely to continue to spread into new areas.

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Behaviour of Black-winged Stilts

Paul D. Goriup



The family Recurvirostridae comprises four genera, two of which are represented in Europe, by the Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and the Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*. Five subspecies of the latter are recognised, of which the nominate race occurs in the Palearctic and also breeds in Africa, India and Malaya. Black-winged Stilts have bred once in Britain: two pairs raised three young in Nottinghamshire in 1945 (Staton 1945). Benson (1950) observed copulation by a pair during a stilt invasion in Suffolk and Devon, and one overwintered in Lincolnshire in 1968/69 (Smith *et al.* 1970).

Given its elegance of structure and plumage, vigorous nesting territoriality, and ease of observation, the lack of detailed accounts of stilt behaviour is surprising. Hamilton (1975) published a comparative study of the American Avocet *R. americana* and the Nearctic race of the Black-winged Stilt known as the 'Black-necked Stilt' *H. h. mexicanus* in California, but no such information is readily available for Europe (Glutz *et al.* 1977 provide the most recent review of the European literature). The present study was undertaken during the period 5th May to 22nd June 1979, in Portugal.

Sites

Most observations were carried out at the Caia reservoir, near the village of Santa Eulália. The upper reaches of this waterbody comprise a series of shallow bays up to 2 m deep leading to a backwater where a stream and some drainage ditches entered. The shore vegetation was largely grasses, especially creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, rushes *Juncus* and sedges *Carex*. Aquatic plants in the shallow water consisted almost entirely of filamentous algae, but curled pondweed *Potamogeton crispus* and common water-starwort *Callitriche stagnalis* did occur. Most of the observed activity was confined to the backwater and adjacent bays, where two pairs of stilts were generally present and a third sometimes seen.

The second site, at Vêdor, was an elevated, earth-embanked holding reservoir whose sides leaked, forming marshy terraces and pools in the stiff clay soil which supported a lush, herb-rich flora dominated by bulrush *Typha latifolia*. Many of the rivulets and pools were choked with evil-smelling stonewort *Chara*. A single pair of stilts nested at this site.

The two sites were about 15 km apart, north of the town of Elvas.

Methods and observations

I identified individuals by features of plumage, and sexed them according to the criteria given by Prater *et al.* (1977), confirming the sexes after copulation (see fig. 1). It became clear that the standard field-guide

description of the plumage of stilts (e.g. Peterson *et al.* 1974; Heinzel *et al.* 1972; Bruun & Singer 1970) could not be applied to my birds: for example, pair 1 exhibited the exact opposite sexual plumages to those described in these guides.

Activity pattern

During the period of observation, and until nesting occurred, the stilts used their time almost exclusively for feeding. Table 1 summarises the various watches, and particular activities seen.

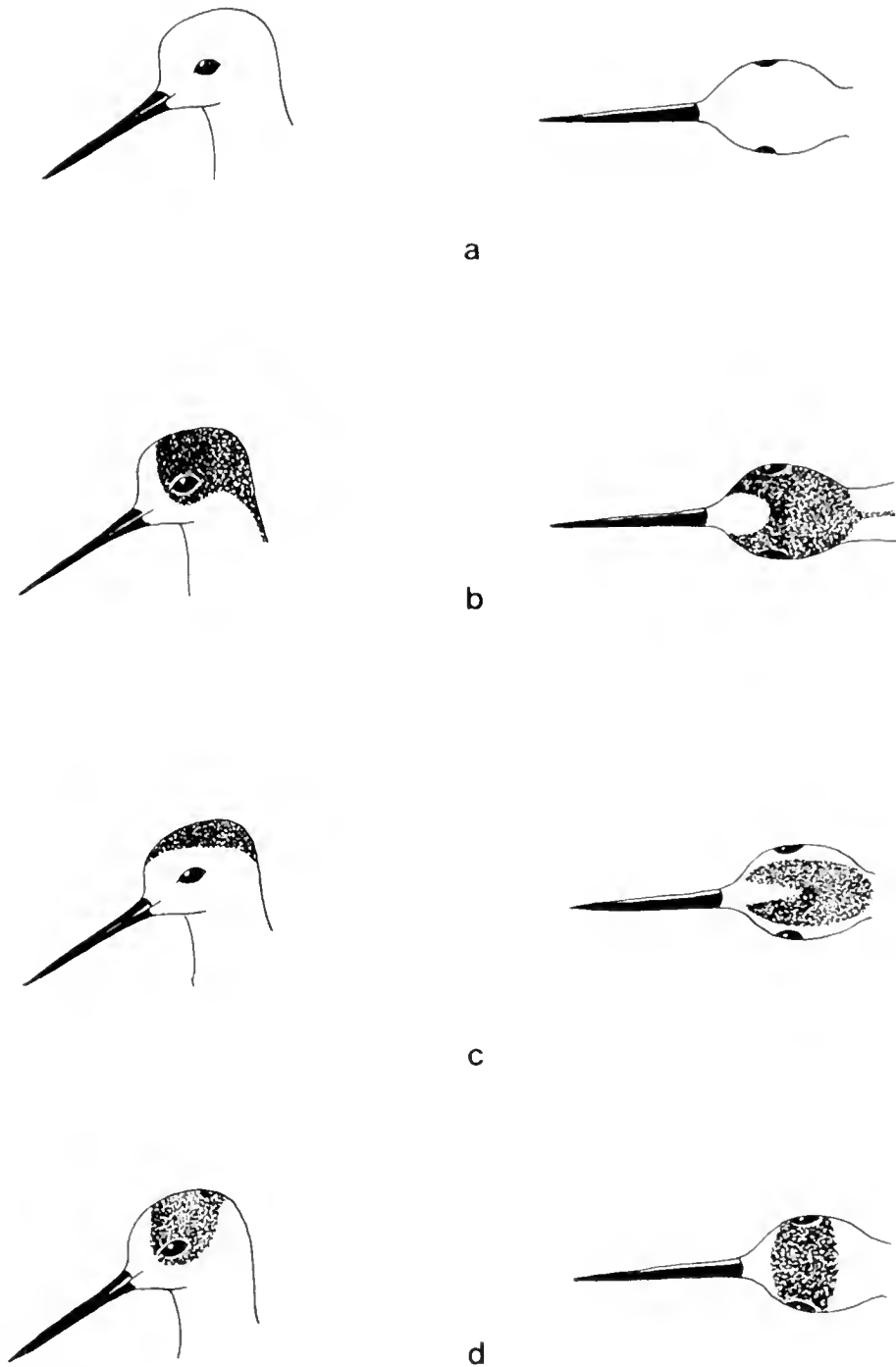


Fig. 1. Head patterns of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Portugal, 1979; *a* male 1, *b* female 1, *c* male 2, *d* female 2

Locomotion

In flight, the stilts used a fairly rapid wingbeat and maintained a reasonable speed, well able to keep up with other waders such as Dunlins *Calidris alpina* and Redshanks *Tringa totanus*; speed could be adjusted by raising or lowering the legs, which trailed behind the body and acted as rudders for orientation. To land, stilts glide down with the wings held out horizontally, bringing the legs forward at the last moment for a running or hopping stop,

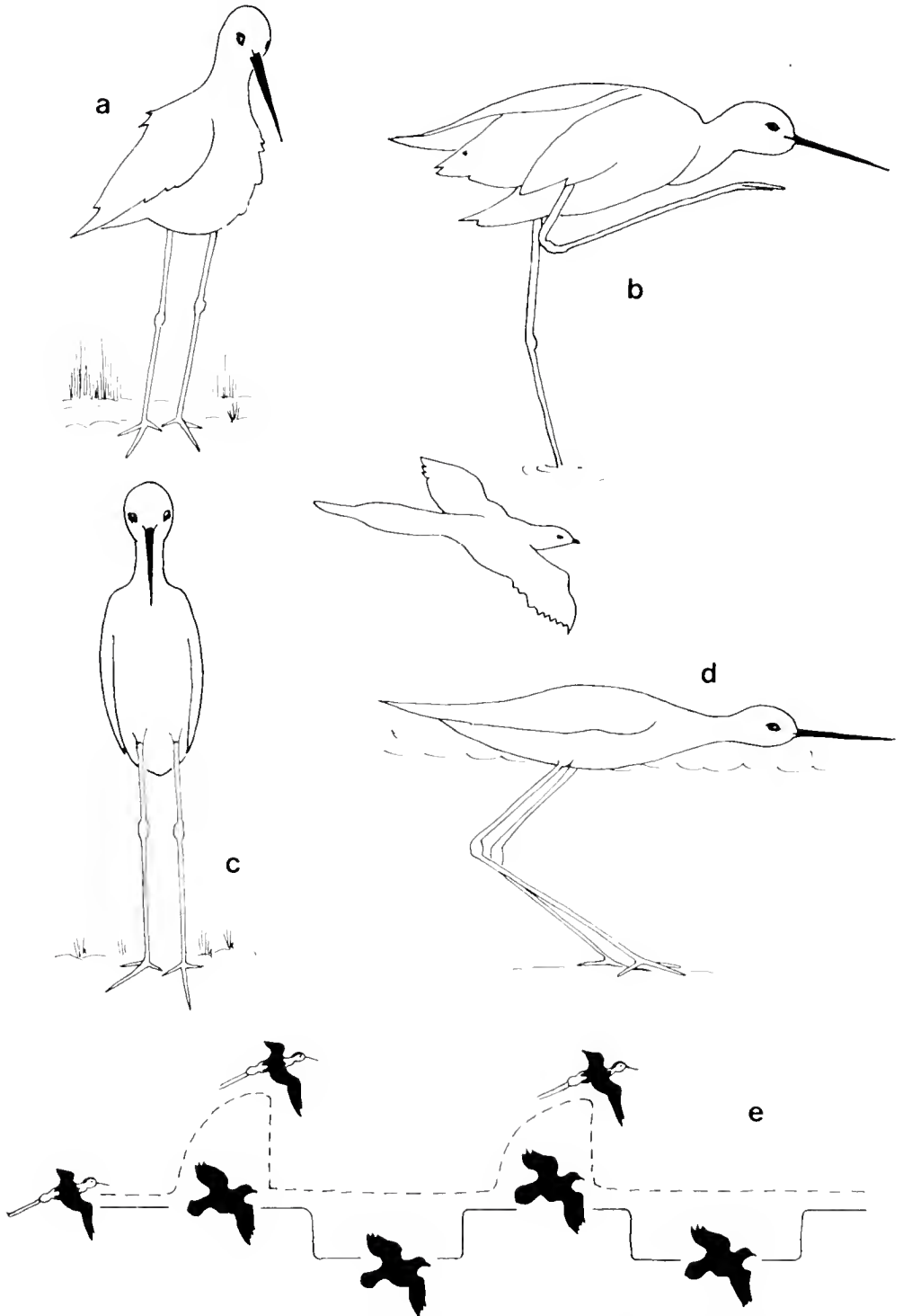


Fig. 2. Aspects of behaviour of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Portugal, 1979: *a* leaning into wind, *b* indirect head scratch, *c* upright posture, *d* avoiding attack by Magpie *Pica pica*, *e* mobbing Raven *Corvus corax*

or by dropping the legs during flight and hovering above the ground, descending vertically on to both feet.

On the ground, the stilts usually employed a gently-bobbing walk, reminiscent of a sandpiper *Tringa*. Both sexes frequently waded when feeding, tending to stay in water not deeper than the knee, although wading up to belly-depth did occur. When troubled by a following wind, one female had to tack in a shallow zig-zag up the shore, leaning sideways into the wind (fig. 2a); but, when returning down the shore, she walked head-on to the wind.

Feeding

Stilts were observed feeding in all habitats from dry land to belly-deep water, but mostly at the silty margins of the water. There appeared to be a number of discrete feeding territories, comprising some 20 to 200 m of shoreline, used by pairs or individuals and defended from intrusion by other stilts. The birds present in these territories, however, changed from time to time, or were absent altogether; there were more feeding sites than stilts, and they seemed to be utilised on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hamilton (1975) has already described three feeding techniques for Black-necked Stilts: pecking, plunging and snatching. Two new methods were adopted by the Portuguese stilts, while bill-pursuit (previously recorded only for Avocets) was also seen.

PECKING This was by far the commonest way that stilts fed. They walked or waded with a declined body, and a slight bobbing action caused by flexing the legs, while short jabs were made with the bill (fig. 3a). The items taken by males were visible more often than those taken by females, and particularly large, grub-like prey were dunked and washed before being swallowed. At nightfall, and by moonlight, the pecking-gait altered completely, becoming remarkably plover-like: the stance became quite erect, with the head held well above the shoulders. Locomotion was now a series of short runs followed by pecks, rather than an endless walk. The intervals were spent relatively motionless, with the head cocked to and fro, and it seemed that prey-detection had switched from visual to audial.

PLUNGING AND BILL-PURSUIT Plunging appeared to be largely opportunistic, taking advantage of especially clear water or locally abundant submerged prey. A male once used this method for over 20 minutes, wading energetically in complicated figures and gyrations, kicking water up all around him, before plunging his head and neck into the water and propelling his bill in all directions, then emerging to swallow an item. The travel of head and neck was often so vigorous that a shower of droplets and a sizeable 'bow-wave' was produced (fig. 3b). Nearer the surface, bill-pursuit was used: the bill was half-immersed, and rapidly dabbled while chasing prey.

PROBING This technique, and the semi-scythe (below), were performed by a male in addition to the usual pecking method, during an evening feed. When probing, he moved forward step by step along the shoreline, delving his bill vertically down in a series of short jabs, rocking his body to help provide the necessary thrust. When prey was caught, it was brought to the surface for swallowing. The bill could be sunk up to the hilt, with the head becoming partly submerged in surface water. The stilt would sometimes twist around to one side and behind in order to probe at an angle (figs. 3c, 3d).

SEMI-SCYTHE Hamilton (1975) described the single scythe technique for Avocets, where a partly-open bill is swept horizontally in a wide arc from one side of the body to the other, collecting prey on the way. The stilt, however, swept its bill through silt only from directly in front to a little on one side of the body before swallowing; I could not see if the bill was held partly agape, or if it was dabbled in a sifting action. In order to get the bill more or less horizontal, two postures were adopted, which I termed the 'Avocet' and the 'Flamingo'. In the former (fig. 3e), the body was declined, with the legs deeply flexed. The 'Flamingo' involved

keeping the legs nearly straight, with the head and neck curved under the body (fig. 3f), and, when the sideways sweep was made, the silt just in front of the toes was sampled.

None of the stilts was ever seen drinking, nor was drinking recorded by Hamilton (1975), but Glutz *et al.* (1977) do mention it. It seems likely that sufficient moisture is usually obtained during swallowing items taken from water.

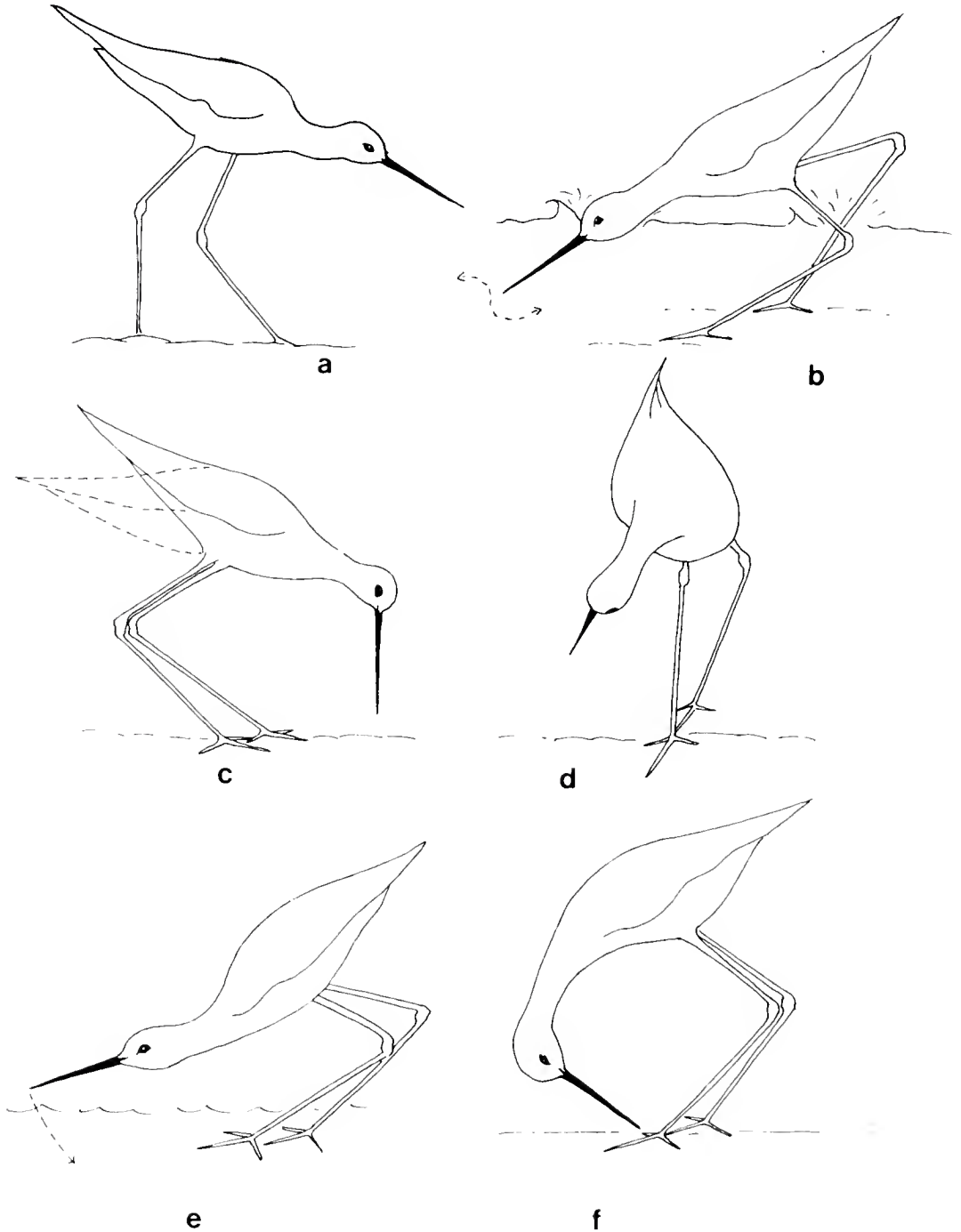


Fig. 3. Feeding techniques of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Portugal, 1979: *a* typical pecking posture, *b* plunging, *c* probing (direct), *d* probing (to the side), *e* semi-scythe—'Avocet' posture, *f* semi-scythe—'Flamingo' posture

Maintenance and comfort

Hamilton (1975) gave a detailed analysis of these activities for the Black-necked Stilt; all of his categories were witnessed in the case of the Portuguese stilts and are briefly reviewed below.

PREENING This took place on land or water, usually facing into any breeze. In water, males often employed bill-dipping, where the bill was half-immersed, shaken to remove excess drops, and then used to work the breast feathers. Females did not appear to bill-dip, a sexual difference probably related to the role of bill-dipping in copulation. Fig. 4 illustrates the elegant postures adopted by one female while preening.

SLEEPING Remarkably, throughout the time of observation, sleeping was recorded only once: by a female in two separate bouts between 09.00 and 11.00 GMT, for a total of ten minutes. The stilts at this time kept relatively dispersed, and did not congregate to roost.

BATHING The most prolonged examples of bathing were observed in females. Since one female spent over nine minutes at her toilet, during which time she performed a comprehensive sequence of the comfort movements described by Hamilton (1975), this is worth recording in some detail. After wading into a patch of shallow, open water, she proceeded to flex her legs repeatedly, wetting her belly. Then she dipped her head under the water several times, coming up each time to allow the drops to trickle down her neck; at each dip, the wings were flapped, splashing water over the back. Water was worked into the 'shoulders' by telescoping the neck into an S-shape, and rubbing the back of the head on the mantle. Next, standing just clear of the water, she preened her back, breast and underwing (fig. 4). This whole procedure was repeated twice, so that she became quite bedraggled. Excess moisture was then thrown off by jumping into the air, flapping her wings vigorously, but allowing her legs to dangle, to a height where her toes just cleared the water surface. Immediately after landing from the first leap, she repeated this hop-and-flap. She then: preened her breast; flapped her wings; shook both legs in turn; scratched head and bill indirectly, on both sides, using the respective foot; shook wings and body; preened neck, breast, mantle, back and underwing; began moving towards dry land; paused to scratch directly both sides of the head; ruffled feathers; at shoreline shook feet; indirectly scratched head and bill on both sides; and finally resumed feeding.

Interspecific behaviour

I have assumed that an animal can adopt one of three basic responses towards its neighbours: aggression, tolerance or escape. These attitudes, however, are not necessarily discrete, and an animal's reaction usually results from one of these responses predominating.

AGGRESSION Most aggression occurred in the nesting area as soon as a territory had been established. Within about 100 m of the nest, human beings, dogs and sheep were met by an incessant mob display where one or both of a pair rose up and circled the intruder at a radius of 3-15 m, 4-10 m high, calling excitedly; at about 50 m from the nest, a peak frequency of about 200 notes per minute was counted. The intensity of the display varied: one of either sex mobbed individually, or a pair mobbed together, alternately. When I was within about 10 m of the nest, the stilts landed, but they continued to call, walking around in a very agitated manner, and making erratic pecking and preening movements. Further indications of nervousness were frequent upright postures (fig. 2c) and bouts of head-bobbing. If only one bird was displaying at this point, the other incubating eggs, then the latter crept away from the nest and hid, but then joined in the calling. When I reached the nest, both stilts became silent and apparently vanished, or one approached very close, calling rapidly. The distraction displays described by Hamilton (1975), however, were not observed. When I retreated, the stilts resumed the mob display, going through the above sequence in reverse order. An angler was mobbed for over 20 minutes, with complete indifference on his part, before the stilts finally gave up and accepted his presence, but when a second angler walked past, ten minutes later, they began mobbing again.

When a Raven *Corvus corax* flew over a nest area when eggs were being incubated, the female stilt flew up and chased it, homing in as though trying to spear the Raven with her bill (fig. 2e); at the last instant, the Raven rolled and ducked, while the stilt soared up about 5 m, hovered briefly, and then descended on the Raven again. This procedure was repeated four or five times

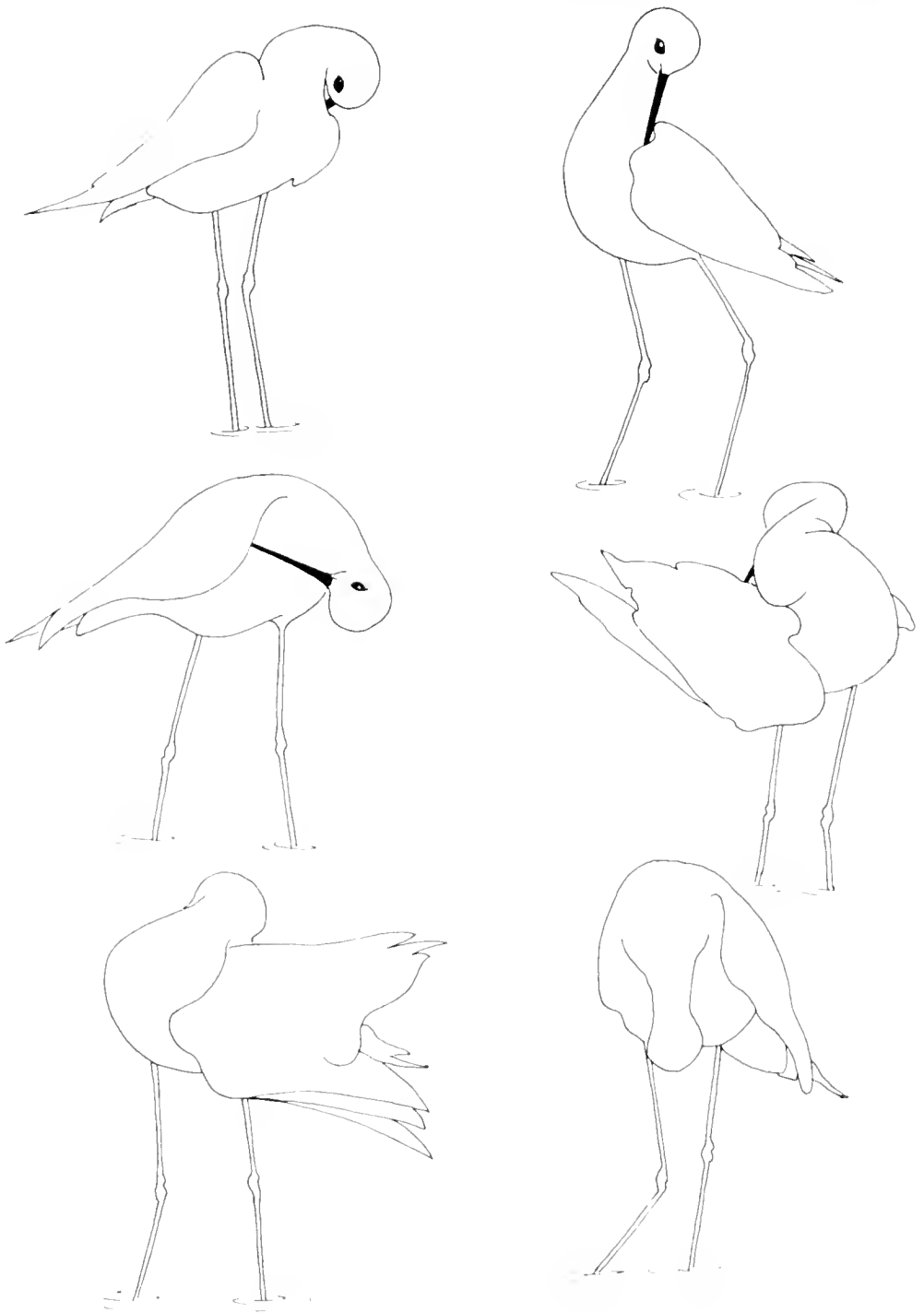


Fig. 4. Series of postures adopted by a female Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* during a preening session, Portugal, 1979

until the Raven was about 500 m from the nest, but no physical contact was made. The male stilt remained at a distance, once or twice joining in to reinforce the female's attack; both stilts called continuously. On a subsequent date, a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* was mobbed at this nest site, solely by the male. His technique was quite different: calling constantly, and flying behind and just above the Buzzard, his legs dangled, and he attempted to strike them on the raptor's back; the latter, however, avoided being hit and quickly flew out of the vicinity.

Away from the nest, the only aggression seen was by a male stilt against a Redshank. The stilt made repeated attacks, in the crouch-run posture (Hamilton 1975: the stilt runs in a very hunched posture) and flapping his wings; each time, the Redshank retreated a few metres. The stilt had been engaged in precopulatory activity with his mate, and his pugnacity spoiled the first mating attempt: when he returned from chasing the wader, the female had temporarily

lost interest. The stilt seems to have regarded the Redshank as a possible rival, perhaps owing to its similar shape and bare-part coloration. After copulation, the male stilt accepted the Redshank's presence quite readily; the female never showed any signs of discontent. On a later date, another pair of stilts successfully copulated while a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* fed only a metre away.

TOLERANCE The stilts seemed relatively docile, ready to share feeding and nesting grounds with a number of other species, apart from predators and potential rival mates. If another bird approached within a metre or so, the stilt would adopt an upright posture, or head-bob, until individual distance was restored. The pair at Védor shared the site with a pair of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*.

ESCAPE A few instances were recorded where stilts flew away from too close an approach by Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*, a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and a Black Kite *Milvus migrans*. One female had to flee from an irate Magpie *Pica pica* by flying to belly-deep water and flattening herself parallel to the surface to avoid a swoop (fig. 2d).

Intraspecific behaviour

The most common interaction between stilts, of either sex, was supplanting (Hamilton 1975), which was recorded even by moonlight, although the area then defended was much contracted. Only a metre was tolerated within a feeding area, and even then an individual distance of 1-2 m was maintained. One of a pair coming too close to the other uninvited elicited the upright posture and/or head-bobbing, just as for another species. The offending bird, however, often mimicked its partner's response, so that mutual upright posturing and/or head-bobbing took place. This may serve as an appeasement display, reinforcing the pair bond.

Hamilton (1975) described a group mob display by several stilts; something similar was twice observed in Portugal, although the number of stilts taking part was only three and four respectively.

Sexual interactions

The stilts appeared to form stable pairs, which were maintained throughout the period. Sexual behaviour was confined to the chosen partner.

PAIRING That a pair bond existed was demonstrated by the sharing of a feeding area. Very little overt pair-bonding display was seen: only two short ceremonies. First, at the beginning of May, when pair bonds may have been strengthening, the male of a pair feeding about 5 m apart in shallow water walked to dry land and squatted down in a posture strongly resembling incubation (fig. 5a); the female immediately rushed up to him, and he stood up when she arrived; both then made pecking actions at the mud patch for a few seconds, as though turning over eggs; finally, they separated and walked off in opposite directions. Fifteen minutes later, they rejoined and copulated, but they never returned to that area, and no evidence of nesting was found. On a later date, this same pair mated and separated as normal (see below), but, about 20 minutes afterwards, they approached within 2 m of each other and both adopted upright postures, as usual; standing side by side, however, they leaned towards and then away from each other, by tilting the head and neck three or four times, before parting again to resume feeding (fig. 5c).

COPULATION The pre- and post-copulatory displays, described here fully for the first time for the Black-winged Stilt, are exactly comparable to those given by Hamilton (1975) for the Avocet. All observed copulations took place in water, which seemed necessary for success (probably owing to the bill-dipping sequence by the male). Two attempts on land failed well before mounting would have occurred. On the four successful occasions, the female always initiated the ceremony, usually by adopting her characteristic inclined posture as the male walked past. Once, on land, a female pecked at the male's bill as though picking at a shared food item, and then led him into shallow water, where mating took place.

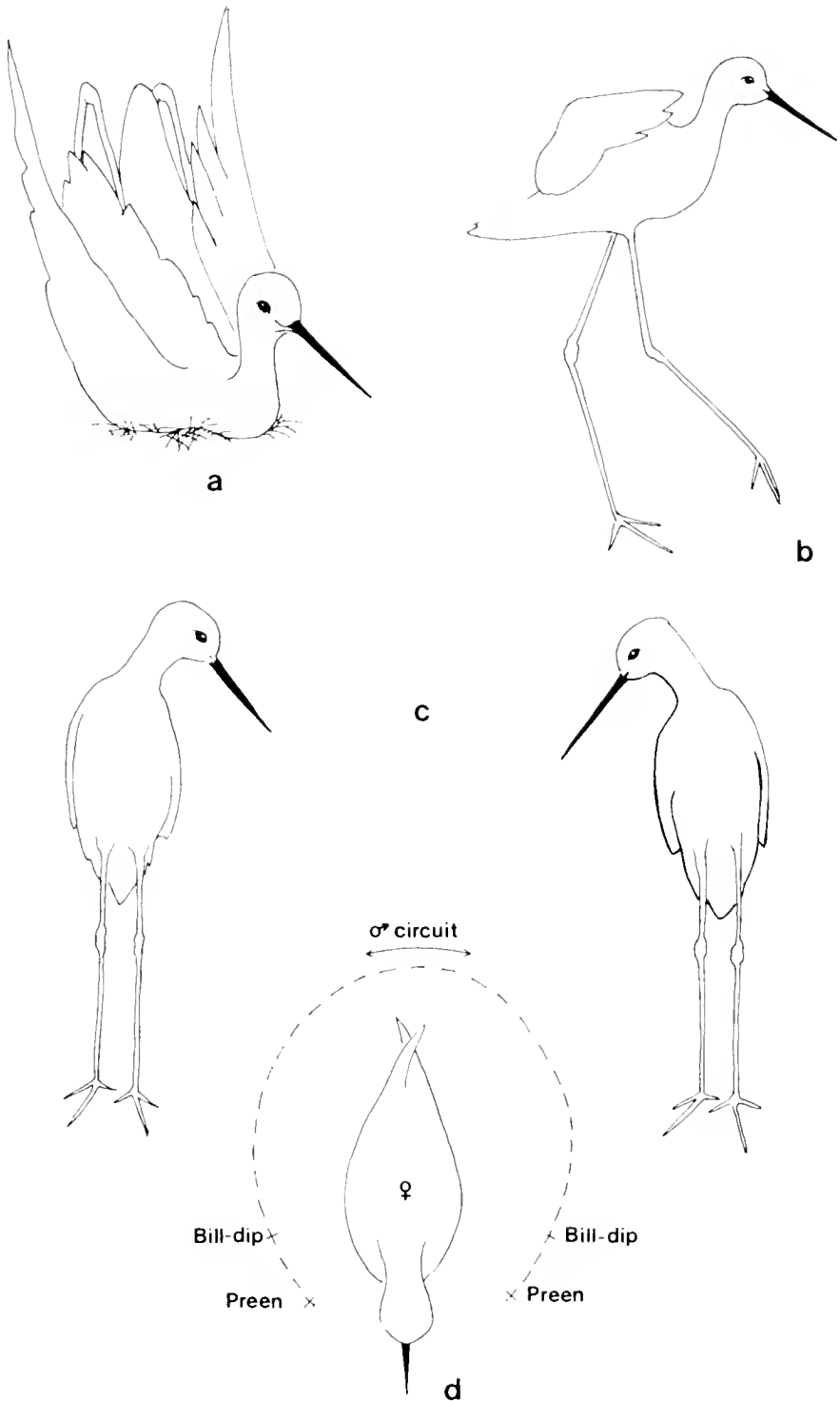


Fig. 5. Postures and displays of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Portugal, 1979: *a* male in incubation posture during pairing, *b* prancing display, *c* mutual leaning during pair-bonding, *d* pre-copulatory ceremony

As soon as the female assumed the copulation posture (fig. 6a), which was held rigidly throughout, the male became very excited, puffing out his feathers to appear much larger than his mate, and striding in semicircles from one side of her to the other, always passing behind (fig. 5d). Each time that he came up to her shoulder, he paused to bill-dip and preen his breast or underwing (figs. 6b, 6c, 6d). This cycle was repeated two to five times, ending when the male adopted an erect posture prior to mounting (fig. 6e). To achieve cloacal contact, the male flexed his legs so that the whole length of the tarsi rested on the female's back; balance was

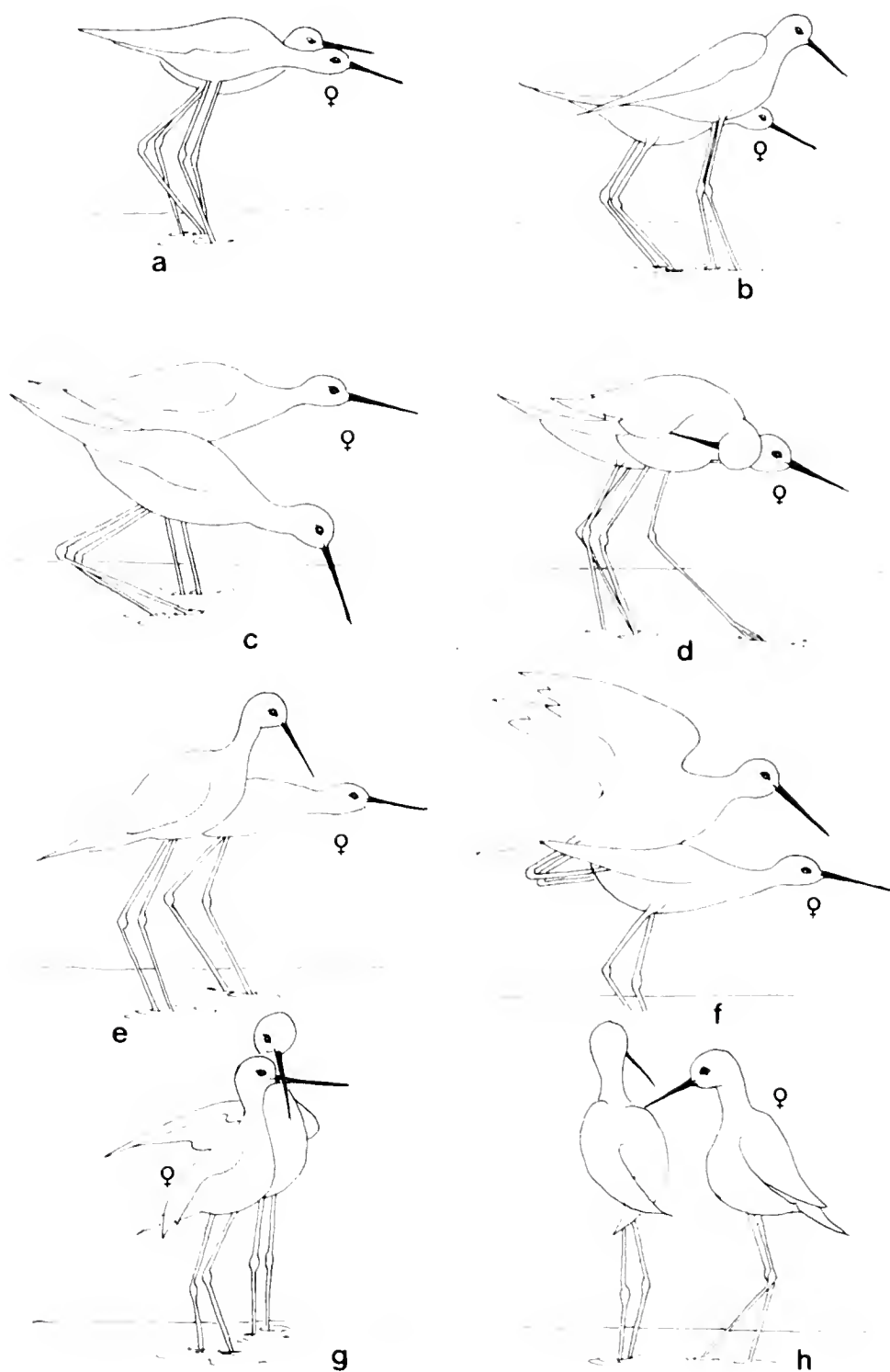


Fig. 6. Pre- and post-copulatory displays of Black-winged Stilts *Limantopus limantopus*, Portugal, 1979: *a* female adopting copulation posture, *b* male arriving at female's shoulder, *c* male bill-dipping, *d* male underwing-preening, *e* pre-mount erect posture of male, *f* coition, *g* bills-crossed run, *h* male and female separating

maintained by wing-flapping (fig. 6f). After dismounting, both male and female adopted upright postures and performed the bills-crossed ceremony: standing close to the female, the male crossed his bill over hers and extended his wing over her back; in this pose, both walked about a metre, either directly forward or in a shallow arc, before separating (fig. 6g, 6h). The male generally then resumed feeding immediately, while the female stood or preened for some seconds before commencing to feed herself. The whole procedure lasted about one minute.

Nesting

The stilts that I studied nested rather solitarily, over a prolonged period (table 1), in great contrast to the social colonies described by Hamilton (1975), or that which I saw in Tunisia (where about 100 pairs occupied some 100 ha of marshland; Hollis 1977).

The only nest found at Védor (plate 5) was within 200 m of a road and a cottage. A rather hemispherical scrape, about 15 cm across and generously lined with dried stalks of composites (Compositae), rather than grasses, it contained four eggs, deposited well below the lip of the nest-cup; they weighed 9 g, 10.3 g, 10.3 g and 10.5 g, respectively. This was the exact



5. Nest of Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Védor, Portugal, 1979 (P. D. Goriup)

opposite of what I found in Tunisia, where the substratum was deep, soft, silty clay, and the nest a platform of twigs built up above the flats (plate 6). These constructions may represent adaptations to the likelihood of flooding and accessibility to ground predators. On drier ground, there is little chance of immersion, but eggs are more vulnerable to mammalian predation and so are sunk out of view. In the wet, silty marsh, flooding may occur, so a platform is required to keep the eggs dry, while the soft substratum prevents approach by mammals.

6. Nest of Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Ichkeul, Tunisia, 1977 (P. D. Goriup)



I was not able to study incubation behaviour at Védor owing to the site's very public nature. Chicks were hatched (I later found eggshell fragments near the nest), and the continued mob displays of the adults indicated their presence, but I did not locate them. I found chicks, however, at Caia. During an evening watch, pair 3 was giving prolonged mob displays to anglers and shepherds near the water; as the disturbance decreased towards dusk, the male walked to a hay-field about 25 m from the shore, giving single-note calls; on his arrival at the edge, two one-third-grown chicks appeared, which he led down to the water. The male and chicks fed as a loose party, within 10 m of each other, while the female fed alone about 60 m off. Next morning, only the parents were to be seen in the backwater, so I lost my last chance of studying chick behaviour. When a Black Kite flew over, however, the male performed the curious prancing display, also recorded by Staton (1945) when nearby chicks were threatened: calling all the time, the stilt adopted an upright posture, flapping his wings and prancing from one foot to the other (fig. 5b) for about ten seconds, until the kite was no longer overhead.

Table 1. Activity pattern (excluding feeding and minor actions) of Black-winged Stilts
Himantopus himantopus at two sites in Portugal, May-June 1979

Date	Site	Time period (GMT)	Activities
5	Caia	10.00-10.45	Pairing behaviour and copulation by pair 1
8	Caia	08.00-15.30	Group mob display (pairs 1 and 2); copulation and pair behaviour by pair 1; copulation attempt by pair 2; female 1 bathed and preened for nine minutes
11	Caia	10.00-16.00	Group mob display (pair 1 and female 2) 1 'panic' behaviour by wader flock
	Védor	20.00-20.30	Mobbing of Raven <i>Corvus corax</i> ; mob display near to future nest site
16	Védor	19.00-20.00	Mob display; male incubating four eggs
17	Caia	09.00-11.15	Female 1 slept for ten minutes
18	Védor	21.00-21.30	Mobbing of Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i> ; mob display; eggs weighed
25	Caia	20.00-22.00	Feeding watched until darkness (sunset 21.15)
27	Caia	19.30-21.00	No notable behaviour
28	Védor	11.00-12.00	Intermittent mob display; egg-shell fragments near nest
30	Caia	12.30-13.00	No notable behaviour
1	Caia	13.00-14.00	Male preening on one leg
3	Caia	21.00-21.30	Copulation by pair 2
7	Caia	19.15-20.00	Mob display by pair 3
9	Caia	06.00-07.00	Mob display by male 3, in half-light (dawn at 07.15)
10	Caia	00.15-01.00	Full moon; birds preening and defending feeding areas; no mob display on close approach
21	Caia	21.00-22.00	Pair 3 with two one-third-grown chicks
22	Caia	09.00-11.00	Prancing display by male 3

Vocalisations

The stilts' vocabulary was not large: a few notes, either singly or strung together more or less continuously, according to circumstances.

CONTACT A sharp 'krek' or 'kek' recalling a Coot *Fulica atra*, much softer and quieter when the partner or chicks were close.

ALARM During mob displays, 'kraak-kraak . . . -kraak' or 'keyack-keyack . . . -keyack'. The pitch varied with frequency: a higher pitch was associated with a more intense, rapid calling. A single 'kee-arr' resembling a *Sterna* tern was given as a flight warning when chicks were present, but the parents not sufficiently worried to produce a full mob display.

Discussion

The observations above confirmed that the behaviour of Black-winged Stilts of the nominate race in Portugal is essentially the same as that recorded by Hamilton (1975) for the race *mexicanus* in California. Some feeding techniques previously recorded only for the Avocet were used by the stilts, and a full account of stilt copulation is given. These new descriptions provide further evidence for the close taxonomic affinities between the genera *Recurvirostra* and *Himantopus* (see Hamilton 1975).

Summary

Observations were carried out in May and June 1979, in the Alto Alentejo region of Portugal, on the feeding techniques, individual activities, social interactions, copulation, nesting and voice of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* of the nominate race. Comparisons are made with similar work carried out on the race *H. h. mexicanus* in California, USA (Hamilton 1975).

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European news

This tenth report includes records from correspondents in 18 European countries. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to 1981 and to single individuals

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* BELGIUM First summer record: Nazareth on 5th-6th June 1980. FINLAND Fifth record: in breeding plumage at Jurmo bird station, Gulf of Finland, on 1st-2nd August*.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* FRANCE Third record: Dieppe in March.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* SWEDEN Apparently slowly decreasing in recent years: probably no more than ten pairs left (none in Scania).

Albatross *Diomedea* NETHERLANDS Second record: probable Black-browed *D. melanophris* at Camperduin, Noord-Holland, on 30th November 1980*.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* FRANCE First breeding record in continental France: three to six pairs in Lac de Grandlieu in 1981.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* POLAND First record: adult and immature near Władysławowo on 6th February 1979.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* ROMANIA Formerly very common, but now only one colony, of 2,500 breeding pairs, in northern Danube Delta.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* NORWAY Second and third records: Aust-Agder on 13th September 1977 and Orrevann, Rogaland, on 9th May 1978. ROMANIA Total of about 200 breeding pairs in three colonies in Danube Delta and lake complex of Razim-Sinoe.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Melldorf, Schleswig-Holstein, on 13th May*.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* FRANCE Third record: Camargue from 3rd-20th August 1980.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* FINLAND Third record: Helsinki on 9th May*. ROMANIA Looked doomed 25 years ago, but by 1980, due to protection, 1,700 pairs in Danube Delta.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* ROMANIA Now reduced to 120 breeding pairs in nine colonies in Danube Delta.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* ROMANIA About 400 pairs in Danube Delta and total of probably over 1,000 pairs in whole country.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* ROMANIA Over 800 pairs in 13 colonies in Danube Delta; also breeds elsewhere, especially along the Danube.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* POLAND Increase in Upper Silesia: number of pairs in about 14,000 km² between Opole and Cracow, 367 in 1928, 654 in 1934 and 774 in 1975. SWEDEN High numbers: 70 records in 1980 compared with 30-40 during 1975-79 (no breeding records since 1954). SWITZERLAND In 1980, 62 nests, 115 young ringed.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* POLAND First record for southern Poland in 20th century: adult near Milicz on 14th October 1979. ROMANIA Reduced to only about 4,000 pairs in nine colonies in Danube Delta; similarly decreased along River Danube.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* ROMANIA Only one colony, of 20 pairs, known, in area of Razim Lake, but isolated colonies away from other herons may exist.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* MALTA Record noted as December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 590) was actually in January 1979.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* SWEDEN First record of nominate race: adult near Växjö on 3rd April 1979.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* SPAIN Wintering total of 2,600 on stubble near Zamora, left on 19th February.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* FINLAND Remarkable decrease since early 1960s: now seen regularly only at one site in spring (60-80 most in a day); elsewhere, accidental in both spring and autumn.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* NETHERLANDS Flock of 18 near Andijk, Noord-Holland, during 18th-26th April 1980 included one ringed as gosling in Manitoba, Canada, in summer 1977.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* FINLAND High passage numbers: 19,000 from one point on 21st May (average for whole north-easterly spring passage, 20,000 per annum during 1977-81; in autumn usually only 500-2,000).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* FINLAND High passage numbers: 45,000 from one point on 24th May (whole ENE spring passage along Gulf of Finland totalled 80,000-110,000 annually during 1977-81).

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* MALTA Seventh record: December 1980.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* BELGIUM Breeding expansion: now breeding in four counties of Flanders (first Belgian breeding was in 1972).

Teal *Anas crecca* NORWAY First record of Nearctic race *A. c. carolinensis*: Lavangen, Troms, on 12th June 1979.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* SWEDEN High numbers: about 40 in 1980, after standstill in late 1970s.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Amrum, Schleswig-Holstein, on 1st May*. FINLAND High numbers continuing: 50 males and 50 females at Lågskär bird station, Åland, compared with peak of 30 males and 120 females or second-year males in spring 1979; only odd singles in the 1960s, but in 1977-81 150-300 noted on ENE spring migration along Gulf of Finland. NETHERLANDS First record: male paired to female Eider *Somateria mollissima* at Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, during 25th-29th May*. SWEDEN Highest ever numbers: 175 in 1980.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* MALTA Sixth record: December 1980.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* FRANCE First record: male near Ruffec, Brenne, from 14th-22nd March 1980, perhaps an escape.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* FINLAND Only records (1958 and 1964) now rejected.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* FRANCE More and more regular (five records in 1980-81), probably British birds.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* FINLAND Only record (1971) now rejected.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* BELGIUM Second Flanders breeding record: Bazel in 1980 (first was in 1976, *Brit. Birds* 72: 276).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First breeding in 20th Century in west (Bohemia and Moravia): confirmed breed-

ing in 1976 and 1977 in southern Moravia; unsuccessful breeding in 1979 in southwest Bohemia and southern Bohemia; and breeding in southern Bohemia in 1981. SWEDEN Breeding numbers: 50 pairs (42 successful) in 1980 and 54 pairs (49 successful) in 1981, when record number of young fledged.

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* NETHERLANDS 1979 record (*Brit. Birds* 72: 276-277) now rejected.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC First record since before 1936: Bockenen, Lower Saxony, on 20th August*. SPAIN Census in spring 1979 produced total of 2,283 nests and estimate for Iberia of 3,240 breeding pairs (9,250 individuals). SWITZERLAND Thierrens from 30th April to 19th May* and Bex on 10th May*, no ring, but perhaps an escape.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* FRANCE One nest in Brittany in spring 1981. SWEDEN Smedby, Öland, on 14th September 1980. SWITZERLAND Two at Laucenen on 10th June* and one over Basle on 30th July*.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* DENMARK Good breeding season: about 50 pairs (normally 20-30 pairs). SWEDEN Increase in breeding numbers continues: 50 pairs in 1980 and 55 pairs in 1981.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* DENMARK Now so common (about 350 pairs) that hunters are pressing for some form of population restriction.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* NORWAY First record: Drammen, Buskerud, on 8th August 1973.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* SWEDEN Third to seventh records: all in south Scania in 1980, involving at least two and probably three individuals (one light, one dark and one probably light intermediate phase).

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* FINLAND Only record (1964) now rejected.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* DENMARK Highest spring numbers ever: at least 125 (perhaps up to 250), four to five times as many as in a normal 'good year'. YUGOSLAVIA Flock of about 50 near Bled on 15th May.

Lanner *Falco biarmicus* SWEDEN First record (but thought to be escape): Getterön during 31st August to 9th September 1980 (one of pale North African races).

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* DENMARK Five records in May on Møn, where not noted every year, may indicate heavy influx. FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Many more singing males than

usual in north. SWEDEN Low numbers in 1980; only 17 heard, the smallest number since 1968.

Andalusian Hemipode *Turnix sylvatica* SPAIN Considered extinct in Spain, but one captured in Doñana dunes and others observed in Huelva department.

Baillon's Crake *Poizana pusilla* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Seven males heard at one site in Lower Saxony during July. FINLAND First record: Parikkala on 3rd-4th July.

Crane *Grus grus* SPAIN Counts from November 1979 to March 1980 produced total of 11,751 in 14 localities.

Collared Pratincole *Glaucopis pratincola* SWEDEN Sixth and seventh records: Getterön on 10th July 1980 and Farhult, Scania, on 26th August 1980.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glaucopis nordmanni* FINLAND Twelfth record and first in spring: Oulu on 31st May 1980 (Collared Pratincole *Glaucopis pratincola* never recorded in Finland). SWEDEN Seventh record: Stockviken, Gotland, on 3rd-4th June 1980.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* SWEDEN Breeding numbers stable (five to 12 pairs, all in Scania) since 1975.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* FRANCE Third record: Baie de Somme on 17th May 1980. SWEDEN Fourth record: Falsterbo on 12th July*.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* SWEDEN Third record: Foteriken, Scania, on 23rd September 1980.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* BELGIUM First breeding since 1910: Limburg.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* POLAND Third record: Pawłowiec, near Leszno, on 19th October 1980 (second was at Nysa, Silesia, on 5th October 1976).

Knot *Calidris canutus* YUGOSLAVIA Second post-1964 record for Slovenia: adult near Ormož from 29th July to 4th August.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* MALTA Third record: July 1980. YUGOSLAVIA Probably first record for Slovenia: near Ormož on 18th August.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* SPAIN More numerous than formerly supposed in Cantabrian Mountains: 52 new sites with roding observed in May 1981.

Tere Sandpiper *Numenius cinereus* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Heerte, Lower Saxony, on 12th May*. LATVIAN SSR Second record: Lake Labānas in May (where there were three in May 1980).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* NORWAY First record: county Møre og Romsdal on 20th May 1980.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* NORWAY Second and third records: both second-years at Mölen, Vestfold, on 21st April 1979 and 19th May 1979 (first and fourth records already noted, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* SWEDEN Second record: juvenile at Stora Rör, Öland, on 14th October 1980.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* NORWAY Second record: Mölen, Vestfold, on 24th December 1979 (first concerned two in June 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259). SWEDEN Second record: ill subadult at Skälderviken, Scania, on 2nd August 1980, trapped on 13th, died on 23rd.

Little Gull *Larus minutus* NORWAY Breeding record in Rogaland in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 255) now accepted only as attempted breeding; again attempted in Rogaland in June 1979.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* SWEDEN First record: third-year near Göteborg on 28th April 1978.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* LATVIAN SSR Colonising new areas and habitats: previously confined to peat bogs, but now breeding on coastal lakes, fish-ponds, railway bridge and on old piers in Riga. POLAND Further increase and spread (cf. *Brit. Birds* 71: 256); along Baltic coast and also inland (near Kostrzyn and in middle section of River Vistula-Wisła).

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* NETHERLANDS Second record: Camperduin, Noord-Holland, on 17th-18th January* (regarded as probably the same as that at Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, on 7th-8th December 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 160). SWEDEN First record: adult at Ölmeviken, Lake Vänern, in June*.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Probably first German record: Sylt, Schleswig-Holstein, on 20th April 1980*.

Little Tern *Sterna albigula* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding in Slovenia: nest and two eggs near Ormož in June, later destroyed by high water.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* NORWAY First record: county Telemark on 8th June 1980.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* NETHERLANDS Total of 80,000-90,000 in three roosts around IJsselmeer on 16th August 1980.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* POLAND Further increase: 475 pairs in Biebrze Marshes in 1979 and some small new colonies elsewhere in east (see also *Brit. Birds* 72: 278-279).

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* SWEDEN Record numbers: about 200 (50 on Öland) in 1980.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* SWEDEN Now not breeding: only singles at two localities, both in Scania.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* FRANCE Breeding attempt near Brest in spring 1981.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* FINLAND Only record (1946) now rejected.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* MALTA Fourteenth record: October 1980 (tenth to thirteenth records were all in 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 256, 585).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Camperduin, Noord-Holland, on 27th May* (previous three were also all in May, in 1954, 1967 and 1978).

House Martin *Delichon urbica* MALTA First breeding record: in 1981, two pairs built nests at Mosta's Square and at least three young fledged from one nest.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* FINLAND First record: two at Säppi bird station on 22nd October 1980. NORWAY Second record: Vigra, Møre og Romsdal, on 13th June 1971.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* GREECE Female at Karamoti, Nestos Delta, on 3rd May 1981 (reported by Lars Svensson).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* BELGIUM First records: Blokkersdijk-Antwerpen on 10th May (cf. increases in breeding numbers and range in Norway and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 70: 348-349; 73: 577).

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* NORWAY Third record: singing at Lista, Vest-Agder, on 14th and 16th June 1977 (cf. increase in vagrancy in Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592).

White-throated Robin *Lania gutturalis* SWEDEN Third record: singing male at Dettern, Lake Vänern, in June*.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* FINLAND New breeding species: a few pairs in south-west in past ten years (cf. range expansion in Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 72: 279).

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FINLAND Recent increase: only eight records up to 1968; 52 (two-thirds in autumn) during 1969-80; influx of eight in September-October 1980,

all *S. t. maura/stejnegeri*. NORWAY Second to fourth records of *S. t. maura/stejnegeri*: 2nd November 1977, 1st-2nd October 1978 and 16th-18th October 1979. SWEDEN High numbers of eastern races: eight records (involving nine birds) of *S. t. maura/stejnegeri* in 1980, including female at Utklippan on 3rd June.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* SWEDEN First record: Hoburgen, Gotland, from 22nd-25th April*.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* POLAND Flock of 17 males on Biebrza Marshes on 20th March 1978.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* FAEROE ISLANDS First breeding record: two pairs in 1981.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus uificollis* NETHERLANDS Second record of *T. t. atrogularis*: Groningen during 30th March to 4th April. POLAND Adult male at Chobienia, near Leszno, on 29th January 1980.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* POLAND Continues to increase in Lower Silesia where, before 1970, was only scarce and local breeder (cf. range expansion in Austria, France, the Low Countries, Romania and Yugoslavia). ROMANIA Range extension: breeding 50 km northwest of Braşov and in Pălăniş near Sibiu (cf. *Brit. Birds* 73: 260).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* FINLAND Second and third records: near Helsinki from 28th-30th June and Värtsilä from 1st-2nd August (first was from 9th-11th July 1971).

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* DENMARK At least twice as many as normal, especially in west.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* SWEDEN Third consecutive year with high numbers: 81 singing in 1980 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 73: 577).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* NORWAY Second record: Ringebu, Oppland, on 16th June 1977. SWEDEN Tenth record: Falsterbo on 19th August 1980.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* FINLAND Second record: Lågskär bird station, Åland, on 4th June* (first was in same place on 5th June 1980).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* FINLAND Repeated hybridisation with Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*: hybrid young reared in 1979-81 at Lappeenranta; in 1979, for instance, three out of 41 male Blyth's Reed were paired to female Marsh (*Ornis Fennica* 57: 26-32). LATVIAN SSR High numbers in east: found in nearly every 10 km square, although in summer 1980 found in

only some. SWEDEN In 1980, 13 singing (bringing all-time total to about 110).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* FINLAND See Blyth's Reed Warbler.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* SWEDEN Record year: about 205 singing (80 at Lake Tåkern) in 1980 (part of continuing increase, see *Brit. Birds* 71: 586; 73: 577).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* FINLAND Only record (1957) now rejected.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* FINLAND First record: singing male near Helsinki on 4th June.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: summer 1981.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* BELGIUM First proved breeding: Namur province, where singing males present for several years (cf. range expansion in Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 70: 496; 73: 577).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* SWEDEN Sixth to eighth records: three males in May-June*.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* SWEDEN First record: adult male at Ottenby from 21st May to 5th June 1980.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC First German record: male on Bottsand, Schleswig-Holstein, from 21st June to 8th July, built two nests*. SWEDEN Second to fourth records: at Hartsö-Enskär from 19th-21st October 1980, at Hallands Väderö, Scania, on 2nd November 1980, and at Ottenby from 4th-11th November 1980.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* BELGIUM Third record: Knokke on 19th November 1980. FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC Scharhorn, Elbe Estuary, from 20th-23rd October 1980. NETHERLANDS Three near Harlingen, Friesland, on 26th and 28th October (none during 1977-79 after annual records during 1973-76).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus innatus* NETHERLANDS Largest influx since 1967: about 20 in autumn 1980 (average of about four per year during 1970-79).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM First record: Knokke on 12th October 1979.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* BELGIUM Exceptional breeding numbers: 36 breeding records in Flanders in 1980 (see also *Brit. Birds* 74: 262).

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* NORWAY First record: two in county Östfold on 3rd June 1980.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus* NORWAY Invasion: noted at several localities in autumn 1980, including record total of 139 ringed at Mölen observatory, Vestfold.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* FINLAND Second record: Rönnskär bird station, Gulf of Finland from 21st-23rd October 1980* (first was in May 1980). SWEDEN First record: juvenile at Gräsgård, Ötland, on 18th-19th October 1980.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* ESTONIAN SSR First records since 1952 and first proved breeding: pair in Tartu district on 6th May 1979; pair in Põlva district on 3rd June 1980, probably a second pair carrying food on 15th June, and with three fledged young on 21st June.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* FAEROE ISLANDS 'Declining very much.'

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First confirmed breeding: near Kladno, central Bohemia, singing male on 20th June 1980 and four fledglings being fed by pair of adults on 18th August; also other Bramblings found elsewhere in late spring and summer 1980.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* NORWAY Record passage: at Mölen observatory, Vestfold, 273,000 counted in autumn 1980, four times previous record (autumn 1979). SWITZERLAND Low numbers: far fewer in 1980/81 than in 1979/80.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* FINLAND Signs of irruption: about 100 at Tauvo bird station, Gulf of Bothnia, in late July to early August. SWEDEN Largest ever invasion: 650 in autumn and winter 1979 (also noted in Finland and Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592; 73: 260).

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* DENMARK At least 15 singing males at Bornholm; four males at new site in Zealand, but only one or two irregularly at former best site there. YUGOSLAVIA Further expansion eastwards and southwards: male singing near Ptuj in June 1980 and in May and June 1981; singing male and a female at Lake of Cerknica (cf. range expansions in Austria, Norway, France and Belgium, *Brit. Birds* 74: 263).

Black-tailed Hawfinch *Eophona migratoria* SWEDEN First record: male singing at Gotska Sandön, Gotland, in late May*, considered to be an escape.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* FAEROE ISLANDS One pair possibly breeding in 1981.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* FAEROE ISLANDS Maximum of ten pairs in 1981.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* FINLAND First record: male at Lieksa on 19th May.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* NETHERLANDS High numbers: five records (nine individuals) during 21st September to 14th October. SWEDEN Probably most

southerly breeding ever: at least one and possibly two pairs bred in Floran, 60° 15'N (part of range expansion, see *Brit. Birds* 71: 587, and note first breeding in Estonian SSR in 1979, *Brit. Birds* 72: 592).

Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea* SWEDEN First record: adult male at Studsvik on 5th July 1980, considered most likely to be an escape.

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Mystery photographs

61 Breaking if not a rule then at least a general tendency, let us identify last month's mystery photograph in the first sentence, as a Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*. This is not a particularly difficult species to identify; on two counts, this is probably just as well. First, it is likely to turn up, usually singly, almost anywhere on the coast or inland from September to May. Secondly, it has the most complex set of plumages—both through its immature stages and when adult—of any



of the ducks. It is fortunate that there is no other species with which it can readily be confused, in whatever plumage it is seen.

The male, when it has its long tail, is superficially like the male Pintail *Anas acuta*, but the latter is much larger and at no time does the male Longtail exhibit the combination of dark head, long white neck-stripe and breast, and black rear. In flight too there is a marked difference: the Pintail having a speculum edged with white, the Longtail having all-dark wings.

Female and immature Longtails do resemble the equivalent plumages of Harlequin *Histrionicus histrionicus* and Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*. Both of these extremely rare visitors to Britain are, however, smaller, especially the latter. Harlequins develop a small white patch on the ear-coverts at an early age, a feature never shown by a Longtail, and are also much darker, especially underneath. Longtails have white or whitish underparts in all plumages. Buffleheads have a much larger white face patch, behind the eye, whereas the white on Longtails' faces invariably includes the eye. Furthermore, Buffleheads show white on the wing in flight.

Thus, any small, dark-winged duck with a rounded head and steep forehead, and white or whitish underparts, will be a Longtail, regardless of its other plumage. The fun then comes in deciding just which of the many plumages the bird is in, and what sex. *BWP* devotes two whole pages to plumages and moults. There are four per year in adult males and females, and at least four per sex on the journey from juvenile to adult. There is also considerable variation in timing and extent of some of the moults!

7. Mystery photograph 62. Identify the species. Answer next month



The presence of some long scapular feathers shows that this individual was a male. It was photographed in North Yorkshire in May 1981 by Dr R. J. Chandler. Its untidy head pattern indicates that it was in its first year, moulting into first-summer plumage. MAO

Notes



Behaviour of Golden Plovers in strong wind On 16th November 1968, during gale-force winds and rain, I visited Stithians Reservoir, a bleak and exposed locality near Truro, Cornwall. At close range for about two hours, I watched a group of about 800 Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* inside the confines of the reservoir. To avoid the main force of the gale they sought some shelter in a shallow pan-shaped depression in muddy ground. There was restless movement among them, resulting sometimes in small numbers taking flight only quickly to return and resettle, but they also uttered a continuous ringing 'song', the noise varying in relation to the severity of the wind and the rain storm: often very loud, at other times less so. I have consulted the literature, but have failed to locate records of similar behaviour involving Golden Plovers.

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Juvenile Arctic Skua scavenging inland during hard weather On 4th January 1979, I was driving along the main road from Holt to Fakenham,

8. Juvenile Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* feeding on road-casualty corpse of rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, Norfolk, January 1979 (B. T. Mahn)



Norfolk. Just west of the village of Sharrington, I passed a juvenile Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* feeding on the carcass of a rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* on the other side of the road. I reversed my car until I was opposite the skua. It continued to feed, unconcerned by my presence, as I watched it for several minutes. Each time a vehicle passed, the skua flew out of the way, alighted on the snow on the roadside, and returned to the carcass a few seconds later. After a while, I fetched Tim Mahn, who took a series of photographs (plate 8). Although *The Handbook* states that Arctic Skuas take dead mammals and birds, it was probably the severe weather conditions that caused this young one to scavenge carrion on a main road 11 km inland.

A. R. LOWE

Flat 4, Upcot House, Bath Road, Marlborough, Wiltshire

Feeding behaviour of Skylarks in hard winters In severe conditions during the three-day period from 31st December 1978 to 2nd January 1979, a considerable influx of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* crossed or passed WNW along the Sussex coast. A few joined Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*, Linnets *C. cannabina* and Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* feeding on the steep, in places almost vertical, chalk cliff-face east of Brighton. After mid morning, a slight thaw made this the only large area free of snow, exposing seeds from such plants as sea stock *Matthiola sinuata*, slender thistle *Carduus tenuiflorus* and sea beet *Beta vulgaris*. During the cold winter of 1946/47, on the saltings of the River Adur at Shoreham, West Sussex, many Skylarks were feeding at the base of sea asters *Aster tripolium*, on seeds dislodged by Linnets feeding on the seed-heads above. Frequently one of the Skylarks flew up and fluttered on the seed-heads of the plants, presumably having noted and adopted the feeding methods of the Linnets.

L. P. ALDER

31 Hopton Road, Upper Cam, near Dursley, Gloucestershire GL11 5PD

Sand Martins mobbing Collared Doves The note by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 71: 221) prompts me to record the following. During late July to September 1978, at Barrow Haven, south Humberside, flocks of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* were regularly seen chasing Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* over an area of reed-beds and surrounding hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub. Collared Doves nest in the scrub and singles regularly flew across the area where the martins were feeding or resting before or after roosting, in the evening or early morning. When a dove flew over the area, the martins would rise in a tightly packed flock and chase it, twittering loudly, for up to ½ mile (800m) before returning to the roost. This behaviour was like that shown to a local Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, which the flying dove, with its long tail, may have seemed to resemble to the martins. Turtle Doves *S. turtur* also flew over the roost, but I never saw them pursued in a similar manner.

G. P. CATLEY

Graemar, Southend, Goxhill, south Humberside DN19 7LT

Peter Prokop has drawn our attention to a contribution by A. Festetics on the subject of Collared Doves being mobbed by passerines around Vienna (*Orn. Mitt.* 25: 185-186). See also page 37. Eds

Unusual nest-site of Grey Wagtail In June 1978, my husband and I recorded nests and ringed broods of Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* along a number of rivers in Co. Wicklow. Most nests were in typical sites, less than 10m from running water. One pair, however, nested on the upper reaches of the Avonberg River in Glenmalur, where the steep southern slope is covered by 6- to 8-m-high conifer plantations coming right down to the river. The nest was about 25m up the slope and at least 100m from the river, in a ruined stone-built guard- or gatehouse within the plantation; it was placed about 10m above ground in a square niche in the inner wall of the ruin. When the nest was found, the parent wagtails were feeding well-grown young, and in one hour's watching every food-gathering trip was made to the river at a point some 200m below the site: a round trip of at least 500m. While each of these nest-site features has previously been noted individually (Dr S. Tyler *in litt.*), I believe this is the first time a nest in such a position has been recorded.

ANNE GOODALL

3 Kettleby View, St Helen's Park, Brigg, Lincolnshire

Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* sometimes nest some distance from water, and this may not be unusual for Grey Wagtails also, although we have been unable to find any reference to it in the literature. EDS

Pied Wagtail driving other passerines from bird-table From 2nd to 11th January 1979, a period of cold weather with temperatures below freezing, at Seal, Kent, a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* visited my bird-table daily, arriving at daybreak and not leaving until nightfall. Throughout this period, it allowed no other bird to feed at the table, including Nuthatches *Sitta europaea*, Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and thrushes *Turdus*. As soon as other birds came to the table, the wagtail rushed at them with head held down. It allowed other birds to feed below the table, but at times appeared 'bored' with defending the table and flung itself down on them before returning to its position. At times, the wagtail left the table for short periods to huddle in the bottom of a hedge, but flew up and drove off other birds as soon as they approached the table. All birds gave in to the wagtail's rushing attacks, some trying to return, but without success. No combat was ever observed; Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* were the only species to hold their ground at the first attack, but always gave way at the second, the wagtail driving off up to five at a time. I did not see the wagtail feed, apart from an occasional peck at a crumb.

DAVID E. PATTEN

Pine Knoll, Hall Hill, Seal, Sevenoaks, Kent

The pugnacity of Pied Wagtails has been noted before (e.g. persistently attacking Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, *Brit. Birds* 71: 539), but the observations by Mr Patten are an extreme example. EDS

Blackbirds 'playing' Dr J. T. R. Sharrock's observation of a Blackbird *Turdus merula* 'playing' with a leaf by repeatedly picking it up and tossing it in the air (*Brit. Birds* 73: 355) is paralleled by my own observation of a male Blackbird at Great Carlton, Lincolnshire, at 07.00 GMT on 7th October

1957 and by similar observations by A. Dobbs in Nottingham in December 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 59: 154-155).

K. G. SPENCER

18 St Matthew Street, Burnley, Lancashire

In view of the note by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (73: 355), the following observations may be of interest. On 28th July 1965, at Worthing, West Sussex, a juvenile Blackbird was toying with a ball of dead grass, which was repeatedly picked up and allowed to blow away, the bird hopping up and down, suggesting a kitten at play. On 8th October 1965, near Bristol, Avon, a first-winter male Blackbird pulled up a white-painted wooden garden label and tossed it about. Dead leaves were also toyed with, the bird leaping into the air and turning through 180° to face the opposite way on landing.

D. WARDEN

Centaur, Ham Lane, Bishop Sutton, Bristol BS18 4TZ

The observation of the Blackbird playing with a leaf (73: 355) recalled similar behaviour which I observed concerning a Blackbird which had recently lost its nest and eggs. The nest was in an old car and the pair was incubating a clutch of four eggs. The car was towed away and, for an hour or so afterwards, the pair spent periods of up to a minute seizing large leaves and throwing them over their backs, pursuing them vigorously and tossing them in the air again. The cock bird soon disappeared, but the hen spent the rest of the day in the area and frequently engaged in the leaf-tossing behaviour.

E. M. RAYNOR

Priors Mead, Nash Meadow, South Warnborough, Hampshire

Female Blackbird eating peanut shells and swallowing peanuts whole During the hard weather of early 1979, in my garden at Boston, Lincolnshire, I spent 20 minutes watching a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* smashing and eating an old, empty peanut shell. Its method was very much like that of a Song Thrush *T. philomelos* attacking a snail shell: it dealt the shell hammer blows on a paved path, and held it by one edge while slamming it down on the flagstones. When shell splinters flew, it hurried after them and swallowed them eagerly. I did not see the behaviour repeated, but suspect that no more shells were present. I have also seen the same Blackbird swallow five peanuts whole in quick succession; try to eat from mesh nut-bags, with determined efforts to drag the bags whole from the bushes; and greedily eat banana. This female was the largest of six Blackbirds resident in the garden at the time.

JOHN KIDDER

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Grey-and-white juvenile Reed Warbler On 30th July 1978, at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, a trainee ringer captured what he initially thought was a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*. It proved, however, to be a juvenile Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* with its primaries not quite fully grown, the normal rufous coloration replaced by Lesser Whitethroat-like grey (with no contrast between back and rump) and the underparts whiter than normal

Reed Warblers. Robert Spencer (*in litt.*) has never heard of any trapped Reed Warblers with plumage-tone aberrations.

The problems of field identification of such an individual are self-apparent.

PETER MARSH

16 Hinde Street, Lancaster

Willow Warbler bathing in dew At 07.30 GMT on 24th April 1978, in a garden at Burnley, Lancashire, I saw from 20m a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* bathing in a clump of alpine plants on which dew was clearly visible; it then flew to a tall rose bush, where it dried itself before descending to some rather rough grass, where it fed and dew-bathed alternately before departing. While bathing, it used the typical motions of a bathing passerine.

K. G. SPENCER

18 St Matthew Street, Burnley, Lancashire

Multiple nests of Spotted Flycatchers Following my note on multiple nests of Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* at Northlew Manor, Devon, from 1972 to 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 36): in 1976 two flycatchers removed the bottoms from all four nests, half built up the sides again, then started four new nests at the other end of the ledge and finally lined one; four young fledged. As before, none of the other nests was used for a second clutch, but a further nest was built in nearby ivy *Hedera helix*, from which three young fledged. In 1977, no nests were built on the ledge. In 1978, the flycatchers built six nests on the left side of the ledge: three perfect and lined, two perfect and unlined, and one a large, half-formed pad of material; five young fledged from one. None of the nests was used for a second clutch. During the winter, the 1978 nests were removed by grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis*. In 1979, the flycatchers built four complete nests, unlined and all touching, in the right-hand corner of the ledge; they destroyed the fourth, leaving three complete, lined nests 51 cm in total length. By 2nd June, there were four warm eggs in one and one cold egg in the adjoining nest; on 16th, I removed four dead young; the following day, I found new nest material in the far left-hand corner; by 18th, there were eight unlined nests, and, two days later, ten unlined nests (total length 122 cm); five young fledged from one and the adults built another nest in the ivy for their second clutch. In 1980, the flycatchers built two nests in the right-hand corner of the ledge and had three eggs in one by 3rd June, the other becoming half-filled with moss and other material.

CHRISTINE MARTIN

Northlew Manor, near Okehampton, Devon EX20 3PP

Magpie chasing and probably catching House Sparrow C. B. Pulman stated that Magpies *Pica pica* rarely kill apparently healthy birds (*Brit. Birds* 71: 363). On 10th May 1974, in my garden at Southport, Merseyside, I observed an adult Magpie chasing a strongly flying adult female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* in the manner of a raptor such as a Merlin *Falco columbarius*. The sparrow was evading the Magpie only by a series of quick turns. I watched them both for 30 seconds, then lost sight of them. Some

two minutes later, the Magpie returned with a dead House Sparrow—presumably the same individual—in its bill.

MALCOLM THOMAS

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House Sparrows chasing Collared Doves Recent reports by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 71: 221), M. A. Ogilvie (*Brit. Birds* 73: 416) and Kathleen Hollick (*Brit. Birds* 73: 417) of other species attacking Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* make it worth recording that in Baghdad, Iraq, well within the heartland of the species' range before its spread began about a century ago, the doves are habitually chased by House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. Both species are among the commonest found in the city, feeding everywhere in streets and gardens. When living there from 1959 to 1962, I became so used to seeing Collared Doves flying away from where they had been feeding, hotly pursued by a sparrow, that I regarded the phenomenon as commonplace and took no careful notes of circumstances. The doves, however, seemed to take flight voluntarily without attack by the sparrows, but, as soon as they took off, a sparrow was after them until both were out of sight. Maybe the sparrows mistook the doves, once on the wing, for a predator, but I find this explanation unconvincing, because I do not think that they would react to, say, a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* by following it in flight. House Sparrows and Collared Doves must have occupied the same habitat in Baghdad for so long that by now the sparrows ought to have become accustomed to the peaceful nature of the doves; in any case both species feed together amicably.

S. MARCHANT

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House Sparrows also chase other birds. In London, Stanley Cramp has noted them chasing feral Rock Doves *Columba livia*, Woodpigeons *C. palumbus*, Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. D. Summers-Smith (1963, *The House Sparrow*, p. 14) noted 'At this time [by end of October] too the adults are frequently to be seen chasing birds of other species, particularly Starlings but also Jackdaws [*Corvus monedula*] and pigeons; presumably much of this behaviour is territorial in origin and the chased bird is being seen off the premises by the owner sparrow, usually the male.' See also a note concerning Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* mobbing Collared Doves on page 33. Eds

Letters

Identification of Shy Albatross The chapter in *Frontiers of Bird Identification* on albatross identification (Warham *et al.* 1980) prompts me to record the following. On 26th January 1979, I studied several Shy Albatrosses *Diomedea cauta* that flew past our vessel in the southeast Atlantic (32° 27'S, 16° 35'E) in the presence of the ship-following Yellow-nosed *D. chlororhynchos* and Black-browed Albatrosses *D. melanophris*. Unlike the last two, the Shy Albatrosses always planed past the vessel, disregarding the scramble for food scraps, thus making comparative observations extremely difficult, or often impossible. The fact that observations are often made at considerable distances and in harsh or weak light serves to stress the importance of finding easily observable field marks. The most distinctive

character of Shy Albatross is the presence of a black pre-axillary notch formed by a bulbous basal extension of the otherwise thin black leading edge on the underwing, a feature illustrated several times, both in articles and in field guides (McLachlan & Liversidge 1978; Tuck & Heinzel 1978; Sinclair 1979; Warham *et al.* 1980). When confronted with an albatross with dark upperwing and mantle (mollymawk-type), the combination of thin dark underwing margins and a striking black notch on the underwing at the base of the leading edge is diagnostic of Shy. These two characters are easily observable at great distances and in poor light and are obviously much more helpful than the oft-quoted blue-grey tinge of the lateral bill-plates or the contrast between shadowed eye and pale crown. J. A. KIESER

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Dr John Warham has commented that a small dark mark at the base of the leading edge of the wing is indeed a useful character, known for quite a long time by those accustomed to identifying mollymawks. It is mentioned in *The Handbook of Australian Sea Birds* (1971), and is specifically referred to as a characteristic of all three subspecies (*cauta*, *salvini* and *eremita*) of Shy Albatross in *New Zealand Albatrosses and Petrels* (1974) and in *Southern Albatrosses and Petrels* (1978). EDS

Post-juvenile moult of Rose-coloured Starling The last paragraph in 'Mystery photographs' 45 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 409) suggests some tentative explanations for the occurrence of Rose-coloured Starlings *Sturnus roseus* in late autumn and early winter in apparently unseasonal full juvenile plumage. I would suggest, however, that the facts known about the moult of starlings are basically correct: juveniles (and adults) have just one moult each year: a complete one in late summer to autumn. The juvenile Rose-coloured would moult into an adult-like winter plumage with buff fringes, which wear off in spring to reveal the pink and glossy-black plumage of summer. The Starling *S. vulgaris* does the same, acquiring summer plumage by abrasion of the white-tipped winter plumage. I feel a more likely explanation for the existence of juvenile plumage in late autumn is the timing of this moult. It seems likely that the Rose-coloured Starling, owing to its early departure from the breeding quarters (Ali & Ripley 1972), is one of the several species of passerine that do not perform their moult until arrival on their wintering grounds. Any individuals carried in the opposite direction towards Britain may, therefore, delay this moult until the migration ceases. The seemingly inaccurate statement in *The Handbook*, that the juveniles moult completely 'August to October', may be correct for on-course migrants, but not for vagrants in western Europe. In contrast, the Starling is a generally much later migrant, and has time for the complete moult before migration.

In 1958-79, there have been 13 accepted records of juvenile Rose-coloured Starlings in Britain and Ireland, all between 23rd August and 9th

November. Of these, only one showed active wing- and tail-moult: an individual trapped on Bardsey, Gwynedd, in early October 1979. This bird was very peculiar (plates 9-11). The left wing had four new, virtually fully-grown inner primaries; the rest of the wing was old. The feathers of the right wing were all old, except for the innermost primary, which was just two-thirds grown. The tail was old except for two fully-grown new outer feathers on the right side. The only other details of moulting juveniles in Britain come from two trapped on Fair Isle, Shetland: one on 15th November 1929 had symmetrical wing moult, the inner two primaries being replaced, but one tertial moulted out of sequence on the right wing, and the tail an erratic mixture of new and old feathers fully-grown; the other, on 28th October 1938, was in the same stage of symmetrical wing-moult, but no tail-moult; neither showed any sign of body-moult. As most passerines should normally moult in a very strict and symmetrical order, these examples of late and asymmetrical moult might be due to some disruption of the bodily functions controlling moult, caused by the stress of being a totally 'off-course' vagrant.

Another possible and often-argued explanation is that at least some individuals are 'escapes'. Goodwin (1956) stated 'the Rosy Starling has

9-11. Rose-coloured Starling, *Sturnus roseus*, Gwynedd, October 1979 (M. A. Peacock & top right, G. M. Tucker)



been often for sale'; conversely, England (1974) stated 'Does not deserve its reputation as "inevitably an escape" though possible. Not a ready breeder in captivity, so immatures less suspect.' (The dullness often noted in adults could be caused equally by the buff-tipped winter plumage obscuring the pink, or by very worn summer plumage, especially in a bird delaying its moult, as by loss of pigmentation or 'condition' through captivity.) The state of the left wing of the Bardsey individual (plate 11) further exacerbates the argument: three of the old, central primaries are broken off in a line, and this line of breakage continues across the other two whole, outer primaries. Goodwin (1956) discussed the difference between feather breakage caused by captivity, which is often random, and what he termed 'fretmarking', a natural process caused basically by interrupted feather growth. Svensson (1975) called the process 'fault-barring' and explained it fully: if feather growth is halted in fledglings (which are growing their rectrices and remiges simultaneously), then distinct lines are visible across the feathers, these often being lines of weakness where a feather will break or wear more readily. The Bardsey individual has convincing natural fault-barring (rather than random breakage) on one wing, but no sign of this on the other wing or tail, which, theoretically, it should have.

My thanks are due to M. J. Rogers, who provided much information from the *British Birds* Rarities Committee files.

P. J. ROBERTS

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Lesser coverts of Pallas's Reed Bunting: correction The significance of the colour of the lesser coverts of Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* as a distinguishing feature from Pallas's Reed Bunting *E. pallasii* was unknown to me when I wrote earlier (*Brit. Birds* 72: 98-100). Vaurie (1956, *Amer. Mus. Nov.* 22: 5-6) gave the lesser coverts as the most conspicuous colour difference separating males, those of Pallas's being 'ashy grey or blackish'; Svensson (1975, *Identification Guide to European Passerines*) gave the lesser coverts of Pallas's as 'ash-grey (male) or buffish grey-brown (female)'; a worn female on Fair Isle, Shetland, had grey lesser coverts (*Brit. Birds* 73: 402-408); and 40 specimens at the National Museum of Natural History, Washington, have lesser coverts 'dark grey (male) or greyish brown (female)' (C. Wilds *in litt.*). On returning to Mongolia in 1979, I found that, in bright light, the lesser coverts of adult female and juvenile Pallas's Reed appeared 'warm brown' (*Brit. Birds* 73: 398-401), but appear buffish-grey or brownish-grey on two photographs I took, and blackish on one adult male. I conclude that my original statement was erroneous and that the colour of the lesser coverts serves as a distinction between Reed and Pallas's Reed Buntings. I am grateful to C. Wilds for raising this issue.

ALAN R. KITSON

12 Hillside Terrace, Steyning, West Sussex

Fifty years ago . . .

'ALPINE ACCENTORS IN SUSSEX. On three days during April 1921, I had the pleasure of watching, often at very close quarters—and so clearly identifying—an Alpine Accentor, *Prunella c. collaris*, on the Headland at Seaford. The first meeting was on 7th April, when, as I walked the beach, a rather slim-looking, insignificant and dull-coloured little bird was detected a good way ahead flitting along close in under the bluff. Its flight and general 'cut' partook to some extent of those attributes of the Hedge-Sparrow, with a 'dash' of Pipit thrown in; and I recognised it instantly as a species hitherto unknown to me. Opportunely it alighted on a 'fall', and then a nearer approach, combined with binoculars, at once revealed its true identity. It was absurdly tame, if nervous, especially of a Kestrel, which at the time was hovering above the cliff. Constantly on the search for food amongst the boulders of broken chalk littering the base of the bastion, the little stranger now and then, especially when it spied a lurking insect (I suppose) some way off, moved so very nimbly that even at distances of only about 12 paces I was for some little time puzzled as to whether it hopped or ran, so crouching was its gait. Eventually, however, I felt no doubt whatever on the score of hopping (or jumping) being the mode of progression. Between whiles the bird liked to stand on a block or boulder, or, as on further acquaintance (18th April and 20th), on some irregular grassy slope at the summit of the steep; in fact, it mostly patronised the crown of the Head. But it always stood very low; so low, in fact, that squatting was immediately suggested, though I do not believe that that posture was ever actually adopted. Be that as it may, practically no leg was ever seen, generally only the feet, which were often splayed, being on view, whilst sometimes none of these appendages was visible. Perhaps this species' legs are markedly short—out of proportion, in fact, to the rest of the body. When thus at rest, far from looking even tolerably slim, the bird assumed a puffy, dishevelled, not to say dumpy, sort of appearance, by reason of most of its feathers seeming to lie loosely and, so to speak, disjointedly on it; the flank-feathers, for instance, were pushed out and then slightly up and over the margins of the wings . . . On 16th March 1922, I again met with *P. c. collaris* in Sussex—this time, on the cliff at Rottingdean.' JOHN WALPOLE-BOND. (*Brit. Birds* 25: 225-226, January 1932)

Announcements

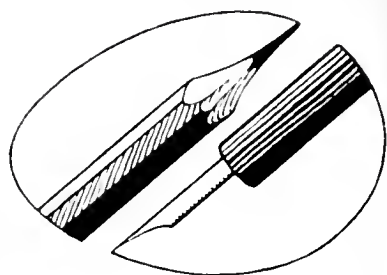
New feature: 'Points of view' We intend to start a new regular feature in *British Birds* in which readers can express their opinions on topical or general matters about which they feel strongly. The regularity of this feature will depend upon the number of suitable contributions which are submitted. We do not guarantee publication; indeed, we hope to receive several submissions each month, from which we shall select only the best, the most interesting or the most stimulating for inclusion in *BB*.

Do you feel strongly about some ornithological matter? If so, write out your views now. Published texts will be subject to the usual subediting, but authors need not avoid controversial matters: this feature will carry the disclaimer that 'Opinions expressed are those of the author and are not necessarily those of *British Birds*'.

Texts (preferably typewritten) should be double-spaced, with wide margins, and be on one side of the paper only.

The popular feature 'Viewpoint' called for long texts by well-known people, many of whom, it transpired, were too busy to write long texts! 'Points of view', therefore, will consist of much more succinct comment: *texts should keep strictly within the required length of 150 to 400 words.*

Bird Illustrator of the Year Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the west Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). Exact size is important: drawings will be published at the following sizes: (width \times depth in cm) 12.2×13.7 , 10.9×4.6 and 5.3×4.0 , but those submitted should be 'half-up' ($1\frac{1}{2}$ times) or double these dimensions. Each set of four drawings should include at least one of each of the three sizes. Entries will be judged as sets. The announcements of the 1979 and 1980 winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409; 73: 380-384) included suggestions intended to help future entrants.



The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Norman Arlott and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £75 and an inscribed salver, and the two runners-up will receive £40 and £25. All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. Artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed subsequently in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Gallery.

Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in, on the cover of, or for the promotion of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped and addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use in *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation.

Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award', below), the identity of the species and any other relevant information about the illustration. The closing date will be 31st March 1982; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ.

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £50) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 31st March 1982. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Gallery. This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.

British BirdShop Subscribers' support of our special book offers and the Peterson Sound Guide offer has significantly increased the journal's income and enabled us to have extra pages of papers and notes. We hope that we have also provided a useful service to our readers.

These offers will continue; indeed, we intend to increase the number and variety of items available through *British Birds*. New items will be announced within the main text under the heading of 'British BirdShop', but the continuing offers will be listed monthly in an order form on the first of the advertising pages at the back of the issue (page v in this issue).

Please support *BB* by using this service whenever we offer an item that you want. By doing so, you will be helping us to provide a bigger *British Birds* each month.

'Birds of the Western Palearctic' By special arrangement with Oxford University Press, subscribers can now order *BWP* volumes 1 and 2 from British BirdShop (see page v).

'Frontiers of Bird Identification' Macmillan London Ltd has just informed us that this title, which has been temporarily out of print, is expected to be available again during January 1982; the new price will be £8.95.

Bird Photograph of the Year The closing date for entries is Saturday 30th January 1982. For details of the rules, see page 542 in the December 1981 issue of *British Birds*.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-third annual selection is 31st March 1982. Photographers may submit as many black-and-white prints as they wish. The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Prints will be retained in the editorial office as part of the reference collection and for possible future use in the journal unless a request for return is noted on the back of each print and a suitable stamped and addressed envelope is supplied. Entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Front cover designs for sale The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class bird art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £11.50 to £91.00; the average has been £39. Why not send in your bid each month? Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Young Ornithologists of the Year The judging for this annual competition, run by the YOC and sponsored by *BB*, was carried out by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Peter Holden in late October. Entrants had to answer a series of questions posed in the YOC magazine *Bird Life* and submit their notes on three months' birdwatching in a defined area. The winners, in the usual three age-groups, were as follows:

- Up to 9 years* 1st Miranda Wade (Studley, Warwickshire)
 2nd Alan Hudson (Whitchurch, Shropshire)
 3rd Matthew Jefferson (Totnes, Devon)
- 10 to 12 years* 1st Matthew Tostevin (Swindon, Wiltshire)
 2nd Rowena Wade (Studley, Warwickshire)
 3rd=David Blackledge (Wigan, Lancashire)
 3rd=Roy Taylor (Warrington, Cheshire)
- 13 years or more* 1st Janet Bower (Sheffield, South Yorkshire)
 2nd Sean O'Donnell (Maidstone, Kent)
 3rd Julie Cresswell (Whiston, Merseyside)



Never before have two members of the same family appeared among the winners and runners-up, so special congratulations should go to Miranda and Rowena Wade, junior winner and intermediate 2nd respectively. Matthew Tostevin also created history by being awarded first place in two age-groups (he was junior winner in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 240-241, plate 113). Janet Bower achieved the distinction of winning the senior section at the age of only 14.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

After six years as author and then senior author of 'News and comment', Peter Conder has requested a well-deserved rest. We and all *BB* readers will miss his expert, knowledgeable touch and keen eye for items of conservation importance. Thank you, Peter!

Starting with this issue, Mike Everett will be joined in co-authorship of 'News and comment' by Bob Spencer. As Director of Services of the BTO and ringing supremo (or 'Lord of the Rings', as Mike has dubbed him), he is very well known in ornithological circles: we are delighted to have been able to persuade him to take on this monthly task as Peter Conder's successor. Welcome, Bob!

Items for 'News and comment' should now be sent to Mike Everett & Bob Spencer, 7 Burlington Way, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE18 9BS. EDS

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Ralph Stokoe The death of Ralph Stokoe of the north of England. Perhaps best known to birdwatchers for editing *The Birds of the Lake Counties* (1962), he was also Regional Repre-

sentative for Cumberland for the BTO, organised the Atlas of Breeding Birds survey for the county and was, not long before his death, elected vice-chairman of the Cumbria Naturalists' Trust. His personal observations, both ornithological and botanical, were always thorough, systematic and utterly reliable. His occasional brusque criticism of those who failed to match his own high standards may have offended a few, but his wit, good sense and kindness were greatly appreciated by a wide circle of friends. (*Contributed by John Barnes*)

William Brotherston The recent death ('on the hill', as he would have wished) of Willie Brotherston has robbed Scottish ornithology of another of its great characters. To many in Edinburgh and the Lothians, he was the determined but kindly man who dragooned them into visiting remote hill lochs on cold winter afternoons to count his beloved geese—and whose knowledge of goose numbers and distribution was truly encyclopaedic. His most important work has been published in *Wildfowl*. Willie delighted in appearing to be an old-fashioned Edinburgh lawyer, but his ready wit was never far below the surface: his slow, impeccably correct English was peppered with a delightful mixture of half-forgotten old Scots words—and the most awful puns, for which he gained a certain notoriety: once, looking down on the Noss Gannet colony, and experiencing the great seabird smell, he remarked 'Now I know the

origin of the word nosseating . . .'. Willie was respected and well liked by everyone; no man could ask for a better epitaph than that. Our sincere sympathy goes to his widow, Helena.

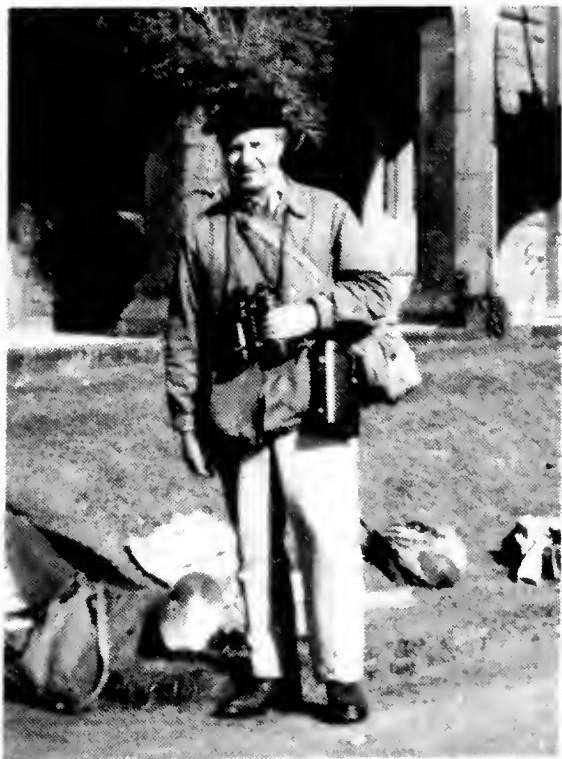
Ribble NNR bigger The Nature Conservancy Council has announced the enlargement, by a nature reserve agreement, of the Ribble estuary reserve by 120 ha (297 acres), bringing the total size up to 2,302 ha (5,688 acres). The area's official title is now the Ribble Marshes National Nature Reserve. *BB* readers will recall the history of this notable acquisition—a purchase made via government funds after an immense public outcry following the sale of the land for agricultural reclamation—and its great importance for passage and wintering waders, ducks and geese.

SOC Conference The 31th Annual Conference of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club was held at North Berwick on the weekend of 30th October to 1st November 1981. The theme on the Saturday was 'The home of migratory and vagrant species which visit Scotland', which gave plenty of scope to Hilary Fry (who covered Africa, and cunningly worked in Bee-eaters . . .), Bobby Tulloch (Lapland and thereabouts) and Mark Beaman (Siberian species actually photographed there). Those who survived the traditional Saturday evening dinner and festivities heard Sunday morning talks by Martin Cook on Crested Tits, Paul Green on Rooks, and Hector Galbraith on breeding waders; these all being short comments on current Scottish work. Chris Mylne rounded off with a selection of things Scottish in his film 'A Scottish Miscellany'. Among other things that happened—an unlikely rumour of Frank Hamilton leading an overnight dash to Spurn after an Olive-backed Pipit, and Alistair Peirse-Duncombe coming through alive in spite of organising this year's beano a week *after* the clocks went back.

The usual *BB* mystery photograph competition caused problems—or, at least, the photograph of a Bonelli's Warbler did. It has to be said that many of the 50 entrants also had considerable trouble over some Dunlins! Finally, three people managed four out of five: Gary Bell, Tom Byers and Ian Cumming, with Gary Bell winning the champagne after Mrs Una Smith had drawn his name from an ashtray.

West Midlands birds *The Birds of the West Midlands* is due to be published in February

12. The late William Brotherston (Mike Everett)



1982: if you hurry, and get your order in by 31st January, you can get it at the special pre-publication price of £10 plus £1.50 p&p: upon publication, it becomes £15. This valuable and comprehensive work covers the status and distribution of birds recorded in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the Metropolitan County of the West Midlands over the last 50 years and has been compiled by the West Midlands Bird Club. Send your order, with remittance, to the Secretary, WMBC, PO Box 1, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7JG.

Kestrel kites Since we published a request for information about the effect of Kestrel kites on birds (*Brit. Birds* 74: 402) we have had only one answer to the allegation that they have any. K. A. Joel of Cleethorpes tells us that his son's Kestrel kite, hanging from his kitchen ceiling, prevented birds from visiting his bird-table outside the kitchen window. Within one to two hours of the kite's removal, the birds returned to feed. While Mr Joel comments that other people's bird-shaped kites frightened birds in the field, he does not comment on the effect of his son's kite. What perplexes me is that very few small birds such as finches, larks, hirundines, pipits or even waders pay much attention to real Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, according to my observations on Alderney this autumn, although a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* moved everything. I think it is time that scientists Evans and Pienkowski demonstrated their credibility by producing their evidence! (*Contributed by Peter Conder*)

Since PC wrote the foregoing, we have heard from Pete Reid of Selby, North Yorks, as follows: 'I was amused to see that Peter Evans and Mike Pienkowski are concerned about the effects of Kestrel kites on small birds. As an enthusiastic kite flier and long-time birdwatcher, I have been amazed how little notice most birds take of my kites—and other people's. I have flown kites of various shapes, including several steerable kites, over several years and the only shape to attract more than passing interest from local birds (mainly hirundines) is a double lozenge . . . in black plastic sheet, which also moved about the sky a lot because it wasn't very stable. I suspect that the speed of a kite moving through the air is probably more likely to disturb birds than the silhouette alone.'

Going to Portugal? If you are, why not lend a hand with the Portuguese breeding bird

atlas scheme? There are relatively few active birders in the country, and the help of visitors would be much appreciated. It is likely that some assistance with travel and finding accommodation would be forthcoming. For more details, write to Francisco Ribeiro Teles, or to Rui Rufino, CEMPA, Rua da Lapa 73, 1200—Lisboa, Portugal (telephone 601048).

Bird protection in Spain Until very recently, bird protection and nature conservation in Spain was pursued by only a few individual enthusiasts, either going it alone or forming small local (or at the most regional) 'ecologist groups'. The Spanish Ornithological Society was more science-orientated than conservationist, with only one or two serious bird protection societies, like GOB, the Balearic Ornithological Group. Things have been and are changing, however. In 1978, an umbrella organisation was founded, the 'Co-ordinating Federation for the Protection of Birds' (CODA), with the aim of co-ordinating the bird protection and habitat conservation work of people scattered all over the country. CODA has no individual members, only member-groups (among them the Ornithological Society), the number of which has grown to 35 from an original 15 by 1981, with two more applications pending. In 1980, CODA also assumed the role of ICBP's Spanish National Section. CODA's main activity is the gathering and distribution of information. Its first major ornithological project was an exhaustive two-year survey of Cranes *Grus grus* wintering in Spain, financed by the European Migratory Birds Committee. Beached bird surveys are also being organised. At last, the constant battle for better nature conservation has a legally recognised focal point in CODA. (*Contributed by Imre de Boroviczény*)

New Irish info Rob Hume has drawn our attention to *Birds around Belfast*, a useful and comprehensive 'where-to-watch-birds' booklet produced by the local RSPB Members' Group, with sponsorship from Esso. Copies (£1.50 including p & p) are available from the Northern Ireland Regional Office, RSPB, Belvoir Park Forest, Bellast BT8 4qr, or from Mrs N. D. Blamire, 3 Craunmore Gardens, Bellast.

From David Cabot, we have news of a splendidly comprehensive survey from Eire: *Areas of Scientific Interest in Ireland*, available (price IR £3.00) from An Foras Forbartha, St Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records



Dates in this report refer to October 1981 unless stated otherwise.

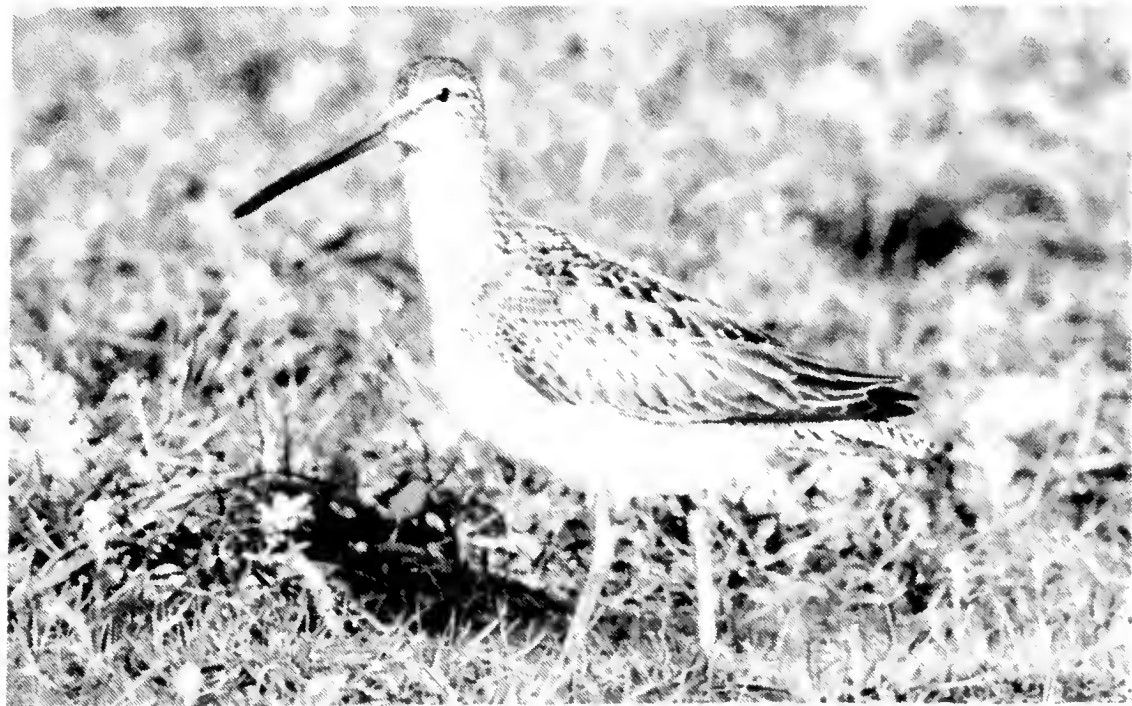
The month was dominated by low-pressure systems bringing generally unsettled weather as their associated fronts crossed the country. The winds were mainly from the west and north, but brief periods of easterlies occurred, which had a marked effect on the arrival of passerine migrants. During the first week, the centres of low pressure tracked across the country bringing easterlies to the north of Scotland, but not until after 14th did they influence the south. Frontal systems

were positioned east-west across the country, with a narrow band of easterlies on their northern sides. This pattern was particularly interesting on 18th when a front lay across Norfolk and extended eastward into eastern Europe—at this time, marked arrivals of small migrants were witnessed.

Waterside birds

A probable **Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus* was near Barnsley (South Yorkshire)

13. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Cornwall, October 1981 (*S. C. Hutchings*)



on 31st. Early in the month, a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* was present near Falmouth (Cornwall), but much more exciting was an **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* at Magor (Gwent) from 29th into early November. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* of perhaps dubious origin occurred at Whitstable (Kent) from 6th to 10th (plates 14 & 15) after two more-reliable **White Storks** *C.*

ciconia over Sandwich (Kent) on 21st September. Nearctic waders included a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* on Guernsey (Channel Islands) from 25th to 28th September, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (plate 13) and a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) and **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* on Tiree (High-



14 & 15. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Kent, October 1981 (Royston K. Coles)



land) on 14th September, at Wadebridge (Cornwall) late in September and Drift Reservoir (Cornwall) early in October. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were thinly scattered in the south and west and included one in Orkney on 23rd September. A **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* was at Marazion (Cornwall) early in the month, and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fusca* at Warsash (Hampshire) on 12th. From the east came a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*, at Sidlesham (West Sussex) on 14th, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on Fair Isle (Shetland) from 1st to 5th September, another on 9th and another on 22nd September. Perhaps the least expected bird of the month was the **Grey-tailed** (or Polynesian) **Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* (not Wandering Tattler *H. incanus*) at Ynys-lir (Dyfed), which unfortunately chose a sensitive reserve which could not cope with crowds, so was not seen by many people. Yet another first for Britain in an amazing year!



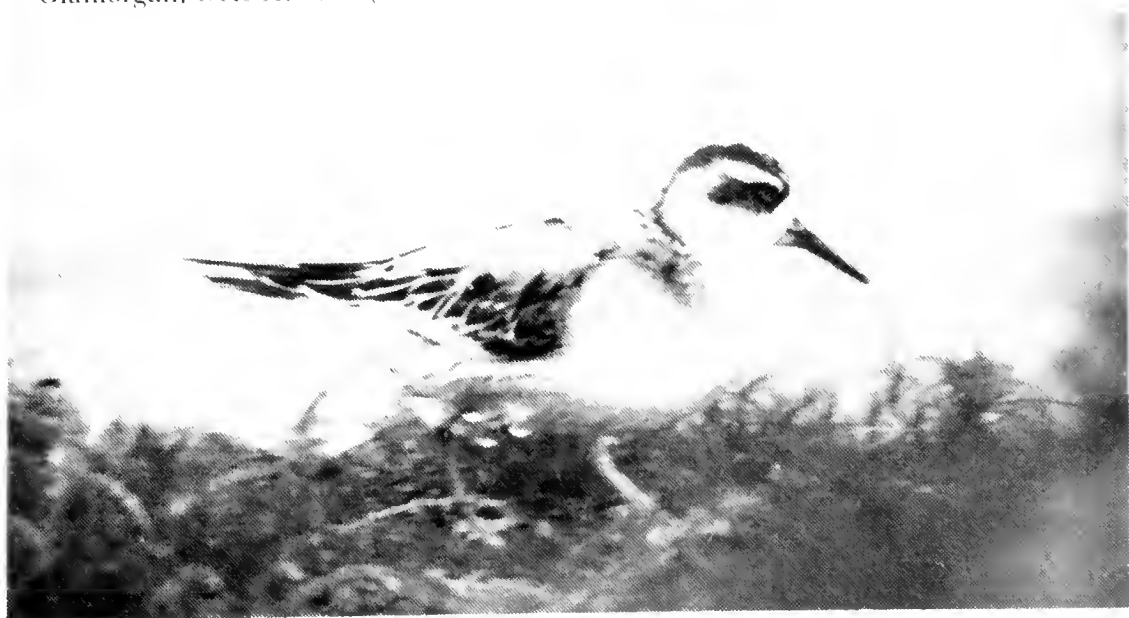
16. Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*, Mid Glamorgan, October 1981 (R. G. Smith)

17. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Mid Glamorgan, October 1981 (R. G. Smith)

Wildfowl interest centred on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) where, as well as **Teals** *Anas crecca* of the American race *carolinensis*, **American Wigeons** *A. americana* built up from late September to perhaps as many as 24 in October! A **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was an unexpected find at Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir (Mid Glamorgan) on 10th (plate 16) and equally good was another at Bardsey Island (Gwynedd) on 30th. More usual was a **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* on Fair Isle from 15th to 20th and later another appeared at Sullom Voe (Shetland). A **Falcated Teal** *Anas falcata* at Kingsbury (Warwickshire) on 30th raises questions as to its origin. Incoming geese were as spectacular as ever in the usual places, and Fair Isle held up to five **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* all month and occasionally up to 55 **Barnacles** *Branta leucopsis*.

Seabirds

Bardsey Island had only five records in 25 years of **Little Auk** *Alle alle* until 2nd—when 176 flew by! Fourteen were at St Ives (Cornwall) on 25th. Bardsey also had several **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* including nine on 2nd. Fair Isle had huge passages of **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis*—up to 15,000 a day. Dungeness (Kent) recorded its first ever **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* on 4th. Occasional **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* included one on St Mary's (Scilly) early in the month. **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* included the first for the Isle of Man, at the Calf of Man on 28th September. **Grey Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* reached 200 in Scilly late in September and 180 were off Treseco alone early in October.



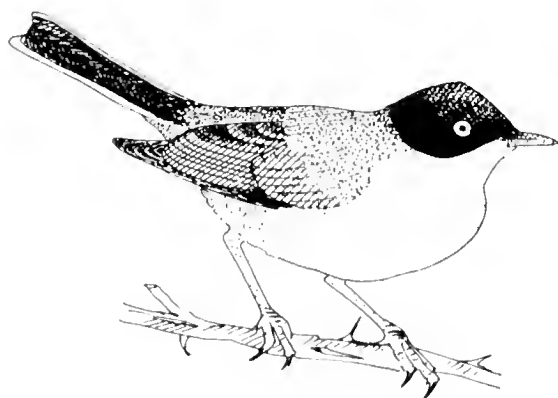
From 9th to 12th a small influx occurred in the west, evident in Somerset, south Wales (plate 17) and on Bardsey Island.

Birds of prey

Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* flew over several British east coast headlands in late September, as well as two in Orkney, plus later birds at Dungeness on 10th and in Scilly. A **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus* resembling the north Russian race *calidus* occurred on Walney Island (Cumbria) on 18th and **Gyrfalcons** *F. rusticola* were noted several times in Shetland and at Sandwich on 1st. A possible **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonora* was claimed at Prawle Point (Devon) on 5th, but apparently more certain at the same place on the same day was a **Short-toed Eagle** *Circus gallicus*, a really magnificent find. Most impressive of all was a flock of 15-20 large raptors on Mull (Highland) which appeared to be mixed **Golden** *Aquila chrysaetos* and **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla*.

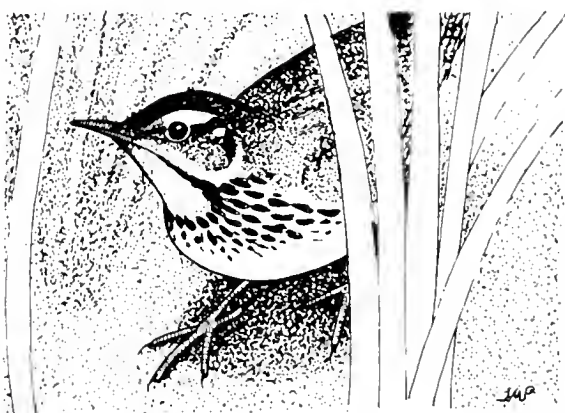
Southern visitors . . .

An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* reached Guernsey on 26th and 27th September. **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* were represented by two birds on St Mary's during the month, where there was also a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*, a species which also reached Fair Isle on 1st, 3rd and 4th. A **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* was a new species for Fair Isle on 22nd September. **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* were few, except for one on Guernsey on 6th to 12th September and five or six in Scilly. **Icterines** *H. icterina* were even scarcer, with just two or three reports from Scilly—but **Booted Warblers** *H. caligata* more than made up for them on St Agnes (Scilly) early in the month and St Mary's from 15th to 24th. In most years, they would have been outstanding, but even better for many was a superb male **Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* on St Mary's from 16th to 22nd.



. . . and more from the east

Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, after an early one in Orkney on 12th September, appeared on Bardsey on 3rd and 22nd, at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 7th—two—Fair Isle on 15th and from 26th to 27th, in north Norfolk—about three—on 15th and 16th with two more at Cley (Norfolk) on 18th, in Scilly—just two in late October—and near Aldershot (Hampshire) on 31st and 1st November. There were two or three **Tawny Pipits** *A. campestris* in Scilly early in the month. A **Red-throated Pipit** *A. cervinus* was found at Drift Reservoir about 9th and 10th and one was on Tresco on 10th. Best of all were **Olive-backed Pipits** *A. hodgsoni*—



not so long ago impossible myths—on Fair Isle on 4th and 5th with another on 11th and 12th, on St Mary's from 21st to 24th, at Wells (Norfolk) on 25th and at Spurn Point (North Humberside) from 25th to end of the month. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* flitted elusively about St Mary's on 23rd. The easily missed **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* was detected at Holme (Norfolk) on 23rd and two were on St Mary's mid-month. A very late **Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* reached the Isle of May (Fife) on 22nd and **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of the Siberian races were noted at Flamborough Head (Humberside)—two birds—on Fair Isle on 10th, on Fetlar (Shetland) on 19th and at Hauxley (Northumberland) on 24th and 25th. Earlier, another stunning first for the Fair Isle list was a **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* on 28th September. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* included the usual small numbers in Scilly, three on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) in September, singles on Fair Isle on 1st and 4th to 6th, at Wells and Holme on 18th and about eight on the Northumberland coast on 2nd and 3rd. These preceded another 'first', claimed on Holy Island (Northumberland)

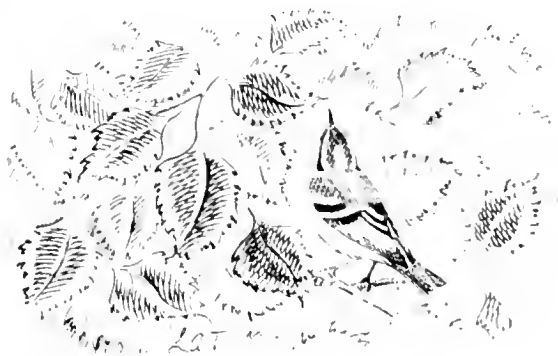
in the last week of the month—the difficult **Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa latirostris*. Perhaps this will restore it to the British list? **Red-backed Shrikes** *L. collurio* were also noted in the northeast and on Fair Isle, where, to complete the trio, an **Isabelline Shrike** *L. isabellinus speculigerus*—the first of that race in Britain?—occurred. After one on Guernsey on 8th September, a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus*—the almost obligatory single immature—turned up in Scilly during October. **Barred Warblers** *S. nisoria* reached Orkney on 6th September, then there were six between 10th and 17th September; three were on the Northumberland coast from 2nd to 5th and three or four in Scilly. A **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* reached Fair Isle on 21st September. **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola*—not hitting the mistnets these days—were noted on Guernsey on 3rd September and on St Mary's on 12th. **Arctic Warblers** *Phylloscopus borealis* were on Orkney on 15th September, on St Martin's (Scilly) on 29th September and on St Mary's early in October with another from 11th to 14th. Orkney also had a **Greenish** *P. trochiloides* on 17th and another on 26th September after one at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) earlier that month. A **Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi* reached Hauxley on 4th to 6th and another was on Tresco on 22nd; a **Dusky** *P. fuscatus* was at Seaton Carew (Cleveland) from 25th to 27th. Orkney produced an early **Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus* on 18th September and Fair Isle had one even three days earlier. The next were six to eight in Northumberland from 2nd to 9th (then three or four from 18th to 23rd), and singles on the Calf of Man on 3rd, Walney Island on 5th and Brean Down (the first for Somerset) on 17th. This westerly bias was balanced by singles on the Isle of May and at Dungeness on 18th, on Fetlar on 19th, two at Wells on 18th and 19th, one at Lowestoft (Suffolk) from 20th to 23rd and two at Seaton Carew

on 24th. Bardsey had singles on 23rd and 31st and up to ten a day were in Scilly in the third week. With these gems came **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus*—pure excitement—with birds turning up on 18th at Holme, Hickling (Norfolk), Snettisham (Norfolk), Spurn Point—four—and Wells/Holkham, where numbers also built up to at least four. These were preceded by one at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 15th and followed by others at Tynningham (Midlothian) on 22nd and 23rd, Tynemouth and Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 23rd, St Martin's on the same day with a second later, Winterton (Norfolk) also on 23rd, Stiffkey (Norfolk) on 25th, Calf of Man on 27th and Dungeness on 31st. Two were also found on North Sea oil-rigs. A **Desert Warbler** *S. nana* was found at Flamborough Head. **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* invaded Calf of Man on 6th—at least 500—and **Blue Tits** *Parus caeruleus* did the same on Bardsey, where the ringing total since 1953 was exceeded in just two days, and hundreds were recorded during the month.

Swallows *Hirundo rustica* passed Dungeness at up to 50,000 a day early in the month and **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* already reached thousands in Mull by 30th September and 10,000 on Fair Isle on 4th, but most other thrush and finch movements were noted as small—yet 2,750 **Goldfinches** *Carduelis carduelis* at Dungeness on 10th can't be bad. An **Arctic Redpoll** *C. hornemanni* reached Fair Isle on 15th and 17th and **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* occurred on Orkney—five in September—Holy Island on 3rd, Bamburgh on 23rd and, two or three, in Scilly. Up to three **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* were on Fair Isle mid-month, with another at Wells on 18th and Cley on 22nd. **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* were on Fair Isle on 10th to 11th and in Scilly on 4th and 6th, and **Ortolans** *E. hortulana* reached the same two sites. **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* reached 600 on Fair Isle on 31st, when there were also three **Waxwings** *Bombicilla garrulus*; earlier, one was at Wells on 24th.

Nearctic vagrants

The **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* reappeared in Cornwall, and a splendid **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* was on St Mary's from 12th to 14th. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* was at Prawle Point from 3rd to 5th—its presence inspiring those who found rare European raptors instead—and two **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus* were on St Mary's, with a third



on Tresco on 11th. A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* put in the briefest of appearances in Scilly on 7th, and a probable **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* also turned up there. A **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea* chose the mainland at Nanquidno (Cornwall) on 11th, and an **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea* at Prawle Point on 14th completes an incredible line-up for one of the most remarkable months in years.

Latest news

In early December, four long-staying rarities were still around: **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* in Cornwall, **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* at Exeter (Devon) and two **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* at Blacktoft (Humberside). Several parties of **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were reported, but no large or widespread influx.

Reviews

Keith Brockie's Wildlife Sketchbook. By Keith Brockie. J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1981. 130 pages; numerous colour illustrations and black-and-white line-drawings. £9.50.

'Not another book of a wildlife artist's work!' was, following a recent influx of good and not so good books in this vein, my first reaction on coming face to face with *Keith Brockie's Wildlife Sketchbook*. A quick thumb through the pages, however, immediately promised something more than the usual bird and animal portraits, and, after more study, those first reactions were forgotten completely as delightful sketches of birds, plants and animals appeared on each page. If the word jizz (often misused by publishers when 'pushing' the more indifferent books) had been used to describe the work within this one, it would have been a truthful statement: the Whooper and Bewick's Swan sketches are full of it, as are the zoo studies of the red squirrel; and these are not isolated occurrences.

As well as the life sketches, there are many other more-elaborate drawings of Scotland's wealth of wildlife, including birds, animals and plants (there is a nice sketch of an oysterplant *Mertensia maritima*), interluded with some fine impressions of Scottish scenery. Measured drawings of freshly dead specimens (very useful for other bird artists) are also spread throughout, making a very pleasing mixture. The reproduction appears to be excellent: the printers are to be congratulated.

A foreword by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh is followed by a 13-page introduction in which Keith Brockie, writing about his study of birds, says 'I can reach into the soul of the bird and, in this way, feel and think like the creature itself.' This strong feeling comes through in many of the drawings, as do the other factors that help to enhance his work: the bird-ringing, which enabled him to get close to the living bird, and the experts who aided his appreciation of the intricate life styles of many of the wild creatures he chose to depict. Also to be seen are the acknowledged influences of artists such as John Busby and the late Charles Tunnicliffe. These facets only add to his undoubted skill with pencil, pen and brush.

In the final sentence of his introduction, Keith Brockie adds 'I can only hope that my drawings will give some idea and flavour of the diversity and abundance of this [Scotland's] fascinating wildlife and of the enjoyment it gives me as an artist and observer.' Yes, they certainly do that . . .

NORMAN ARIOTT

Endangered Birds of the World: the ICBP Red Data Book. Compiled by Warren B. King. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1981. Hardback £11.95; paperback £5.50.

This is an extensive revision of the first Red Data Book on Birds, published in 1966. It includes 437 species and subspecies, divided into three main groups—endangered, vulnerable or rare—together with those thought to be in one of these categories whose precise status cannot at present be determined. For each, there are sections on current status, distribution, population, habitat, and conservation measures taken and proposed. These are admirably full and

up-to-date, and the compiler is to be warmly congratulated on the thoroughness with which he has surveyed the relevant literature and the energy with which he has consulted experts all over the world. It also contains lists of birds known or thought to have become extinct since 1600, a list of birds dropped from the original list in the light of recent knowledge, and a useful summary of threatened birds arranged under zoogeographical regions and countries. An index of species and subspecies should be considered for future revisions.

A few conservationists still deplore what they regard as an excessive concentration of effort on threatened species (and more might regret the inclusion of subspecies, which make up nearly 40% of the total here). The Red Data Book idea has, however, been an undoubted success, and is being adopted in more and more continents and countries; clearly peoples, and governments, are moved to action by the fear that the rich variety of living forms may be further impoverished. Moreover, as its World Conservation Bird Programme shows, the ICBP realises that the safeguarding of habitats is the key to the protection of species and it is devoting its main efforts to this. So, this scholarly publication is to be warmly welcomed as a spur to action and as an incentive to globe-trotting ornithologists to help fill the many gaps in our current knowledge.

STANLEY CRAMP

A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies. By Roger Tory Peterson. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1980. 384 pages; 136 plates; 390 maps. \$9.95.

Although this is the fourth edition of the field guide first published in 1934, of which the third edition (1917) is perhaps the most familiar, this is, in effect, a completely new book. The 1947 edition had 36 colour plates and 24 black-and-white plates, whereas this new book has 136 plates, all in colour except ten (flying ducks, flying waders and flying raptors). The paintings are all new and of the taken-for-granted Peterson excellence. The major change from previous editions, however, is that the illustrations face the relevant text; the number of species per plate and per facing page of text is also reduced from usually more than ten in previous editions to usually less than five in this edition. The added space has made it possible not only for illustrations to be generally larger, but also for more plumages (particularly immatures) to be illustrated. Distribution maps appear as a new feature, in a special section at the end of the book.

Some American birders have expressed disappointment that certain identification features now used to distinguish some species-pairs have not been included. I suggest that their judgment has been clouded by their obsession with minutiae. This is a marvellous book, bringing the trail-blazing original field guide bang up to date for the 1980s. The illustrations are superb and the reliable texts are as thorough as is possible in the space available in a book with this format. Every American birder, every West European twitcher, most European birders and all birdwatchers visiting eastern North America will need a copy of this excellent book. This guide to the birds of eastern North America combines all the best features of our *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom, third edition 1974) and *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* (Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow, 1972). As Peter Conder and Mike Everett have already said: 'Come over here, Roger, we've got a job for you!' (*Brit. Birds* 74: 50).

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Sketches of Bird Life. By the late C. F. Tunnicliffe RA, introduced and edited by Robert Gillmor. Victor Gollancz, London, 1981. 122 coloured and line drawings. £10.95.

After some heartstopping moments during which they might have been sold in a world-wide scatter, Charles Tunnicliffe's sketchbooks and measured drawings are to find a permanent home in Anglesey. Few people have been more active in preventing the break-up of the master painter's work than his worthy successor Robert Gillmor, and this book is the first outcome of the recent care of Tunnicliffe's legacy of ornithological art, fully supported by the continuing initiative of Victor Gollancz in publishing a series of books as a summation of it. Like its recent precursors—*A Sketchbook of Birds* and *Portrait of a Country, Artist*—the book is a pure delight, with a pleasing subject and a lesson in bird drawing and painting on almost every page. These are arranged within the headings of courtship and display, the young bird, feeding, flying, other

behaviour, and picture making; and Robert Gillmor contributes a short written guide to each, assisting both interpretation and appreciation of the drawings. Many field notes and extracts from Tunncliffe's earlier books are set alongside them. So, all in all, it is that best of treasures, a really instructive one; and my only minor irritation stems from the absence of all but one of the superb measured drawings. Still, that means that the best is yet to come!

D. I. M. WALLACE

Island Populations. By Mark Williamson. Oxford University Press, 1981. xi + 286 pages; many text figures, three black-and-white plates. £19.00.

Islands tend to have fewer species than equivalent areas of mainland. As the distance of islands from the mainland increases, the number of species tends to diminish. These two observations have been known for a long time, but in recent years biologists have been trying precisely to quantify the differences and to explain why they should be so. There have been a considerable number of papers and books on the subject; Diamond, Lack, MacArthur, Simberloff and Wilson are among the first names that spring to mind as important contributors to the subject.

It might be thought that such an interest was a rather specialised one, but there is a number of ways in which it is of broader interest. First, why should England have so many fewer breeding species of landbirds than the countries on the other side of the North Sea and the Channel, and why should Ireland have only about 60% of the bird species that occur in Britain? Secondly, much of what has been observed about islands has had an important impact on our thoughts about evolution in general—one might merely mention the Galapagos finches and Charles Darwin in this respect. Thirdly, many habitats on the mainland can be considered as islands—and certainly they may 'behave' in the same way. An obvious example is the tops of isolated mountains—such as those in Africa—where the fauna and flora have nothing in common with the lowland ones, but are clearly related to those on other mountain-tops perhaps many hundreds of miles away. Closer to home, man's felling of the main forest cover in most countries has led to the remaining forests being islands at least to some extent. An understanding of the concept of species numbers in relation to land area has important implications for conservation. For example, a ten-fold increase in area (of an island) leads to doubling of the number of species found there. If the same holds true for forest 'islands', it would be better to press for one large reserve than for ten small ones.

In *Island Populations*, Professor Williamson reviews the literature on this interesting subject. Much of the work is not, of course, on birds, but on other groups of animals and on plants. Birds, however, remain one of the best-known groups of organisms, and there is a great deal of information about them. The book starts off, a little slowly I thought, with a detailed discussion of islands and how they were formed. There is a useful bringing together of some of the information on the changes in sea-levels in the last glaciation; this had an important effect on many islands, since, when the sea dropped to its lowest level (some 90-120 m below current levels), many islands were attached to the adjacent mainland by dry land.

The second part of the book discusses the numbers of species on islands, species/area relationships, the theories of species abundance and species composition. The third part discusses what has been learned about the evolution of island forms in isolation from their mainland ancestors. There are chapters headed 'Micro-evolution: island sub-species and niche variation'; 'Speciation on islands and the taxon cycle: Hawaiian Drosophilidae' (a very large family of fruit flies which have yielded some particularly interesting information); 'Evolution on archipelagoes'. The fourth and final part is entitled 'The structure of island communities' and discusses ecological processes on islands, competition and feeding relationships and island communities. There is a very useful bibliography.

In all sections, the many explanations that have been put forward to explain these observations are clearly presented and discussed. It is surprising how difficult it has been to provide theories on any of these subjects which adequately explain the situations found on islands. Perhaps one of the lessons to be drawn is that simple theories seldom hold world-wide: the real world is too complex and many factors have affected the distributions of organisms on islands, so that, on its own, each theory is inadequate.

The book is well presented and many ornithologists will find it illuminating reading. They may, however, even in these days of inflation, think twice before buying it: £19 is a lot to pay for about 290 pages of print (about 6½p per page!).

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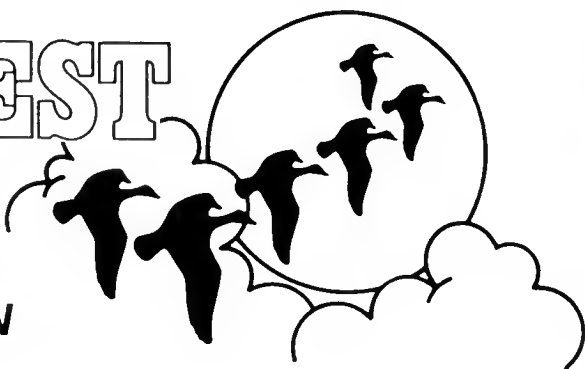
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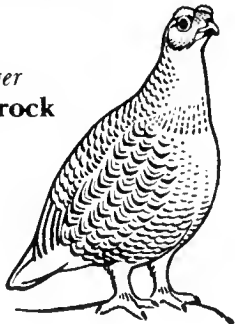
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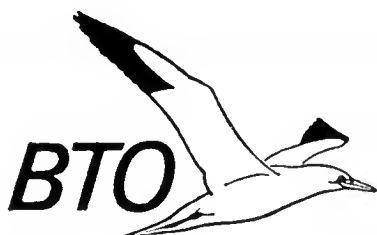
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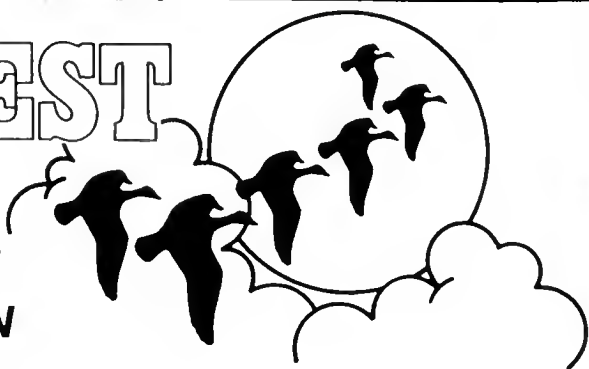
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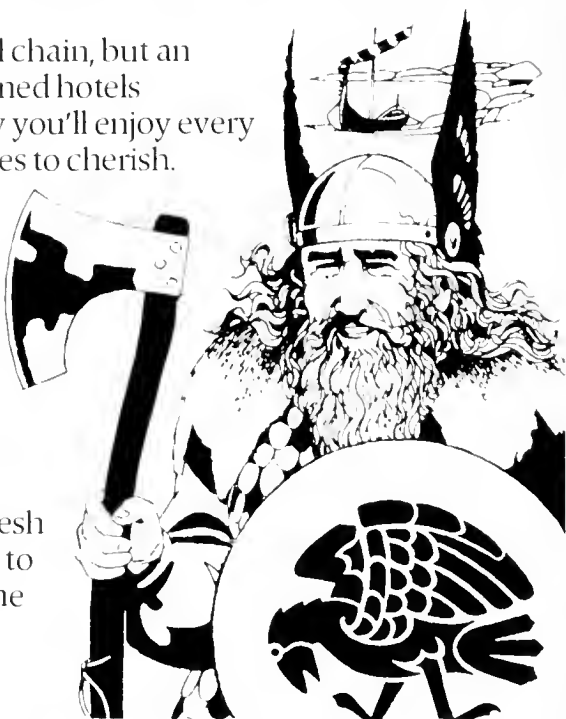
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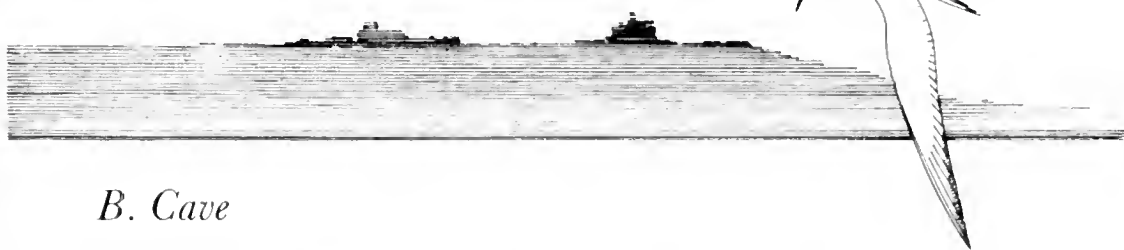
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 2 FEBRUARY 1982



Forster's Tern: new to Britain and Ireland



B. Cave

At about 12.00 GMT on 29th January 1980, I was surprised to notice a tern feeding well offshore in the bay at Swanpool, Falmouth, Cornwall. Its lean proportions and plunge-diving habits recalled a Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, but after a few minutes the bird disappeared and its identification remained inconclusive. On 20th February, from the same position, I saw the bird again at closer range for about five minutes. Its general structure, behaviour and coloration again recalled a rather diminutive Sandwich Tern, but further thoughts of this species were dispelled by a sight of orange-red legs. The upperwing showed an interesting pattern—grey mantle and coverts leading into a pale area which extended in a short wedge down the dusky-grey primaries—and the tail had dark tips to the outer feathers. Its most striking feature, however, was a defined blackish patch around the eye. Later reference to Tuck & Heinzel (1978) and Robbins *et al.* (1966) raised the possibility that the bird was a Forster's Tern *S. forsteri* in winter plumage: both mentioned the importance of the dark eye-patches, but the first described them as 'large' and the second as 'narrow'. They also emphasised the extreme similarity between Forster's and Common Terns *S. hirundo*, a comparison which had not occurred to me. Also, confusingly, the primaries were stated to be 'silvery grey' or 'paler than the rest of wing', and the tail 'pale grey' or 'grey with white outer margin'.

I felt that the discrepancies could be accounted for by the fact that the bird may have been an immature Forster's Tern, whereas these brief descriptions referred to adult plumage, but at this stage there was also the nagging possibility that it might be one of the commoner species of tern in an aberrant plumage, or a winter plumage with which I was unfamiliar. Clearly, further confirmation was needed, and to this end I informed several observers of the presence of the strange tern. Despite extensive



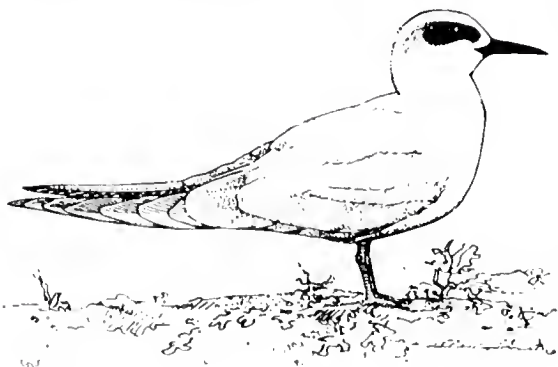
18 & 19. First-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Cornwall, March 1980 (J. H. Johns)

coverage, however, it was not until 9th March that I eventually relocated it, off Gyllngvase, Falmouth. After a few minutes, the tern settled among gulls *Larus* on the rocks, and I was able to obtain my first good views and confirm my initial tentative identification: the bird's small size and stunning black eye-patches were clearly seen. Atypically, the bird obliged many hundreds of observers by remaining in the area until it was last seen on the evening of 18th March. Subsequently, it was aged as an individual in first-winter plumage. Reports of a medium-sized *Sterna* tern in the area from mid December 1979 may also have referred to this bird.

The following description is compiled from my own notes and those of S. C. Huthings (taken on three dates in March) and P. J. Grant (taken on 15th March).

SIZE AND GENERAL CHARACTERS About size of Common Tern but general paleness of plumage, plunge-diving habits, and rather long, blackish bill often recalling dainty Sandwich Tern. Tail deeply forked, but looking short in flight. When perched, primaries extending clearly beyond tip of tail. **HEAD** Forehead and forecrown white at distance, but at close range lightly speckled with grey. Sides and rear of crown and upper nape grey, extending down to point in centre of nape; at some angles at long range, grey nape appeared as dark extension of black eye-patches. Ear-coverts and spot in front of and around eye black, forming prominent, clear-cut mask, broken by intrusion of white below eye and by thin white eye-ring. Remainder of head white. **UPPERPARTS** Pale grey; when perched at close range very faint

buffy wash visible. Rump white. **UNDERPARTS** White. **UPPERWING** Inner wing grey with thin subterminal darker bar and thin white trailing edge on inner secondaries; outer secondaries mainly white. Fringes of outer greater coverts and inner primaries white. Outer wing pale grey with ill-defined dark trailing edge to outer primaries and dark leading edge on outermost primary. Broad, frosty or whitish panel across primaries and their coverts, extending outwards from white trailing edge of inner wing; prominence of whitish panel varied in different light conditions, but most obvious in bright sunlight. When perched, closed primaries darker than rest of upperparts, and at close range dusky centres visible on two exposed tertials. **UNDERWING** White, with broad, ill-defined dusky trailing edge to outermost primaries (pattern similar to Common Tern). **TAIL** Outer web of outer feather white, remainder of tail pale grey except for smudgy dark grey tips to outer two or three pairs of feathers. Pale grey coloration virtually impossible to detect, and dark grey tips visible only at close range, thus, at long range, tail appeared all-white. **BARE PARTS** Bill black, with small area of reddish or brownish at base of lower mandible. Evenly tapering from thick base to tip, giving dagger or chisel shape (recalling Arctic *S. paradisaea*





20-23. First-winter Forster's Tern
Sterna forsteri. Cornwall. March
1980 (*J. H. Johns*)



rather than Common Tern in shape, but longer). Mouth red. Eye black. Legs orange-red, long and sturdy, slightly longer than on Common Tern. voice Tim Pinfield (*in litt.*)

noted call as soft, descending 'jeeeet', but with trilling or guttural quality like that of other terns.

Godfrey (1966) gave the following measurements (all in mm): mean length of exposed culmen, Forster's Tern 39.4, Common Tern 37.1; mean tarsus length, Forster's Tern 24, Common Tern 20.8. These measurements support the field impression of long bill and legs.

Throughout its stay, the Forster's Tern fed by plunge-diving, mainly after sandeels, usually, but not always, close inshore. Bent (1921) mentioned that the species will also hawk for insects and (curiously in view of the Falmouth bird's feeding behaviour) that 'it sometimes makes a diving plunge but more often it drops down lightly or swoops gracefully along the surface picking up its food without wetting its plumage.' On several



24 & 25. First-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Cornwall, March 1980 (*J. H. Johns*)
occasions, the Falmouth bird settled on the sea among gulls, sometimes for long periods.

P. J. Grant has examined skins of Forster's Tern at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, and has provided the following comments. Juveniles resemble other medium-sized *Sterna* terns in general appearance, with ginger-brown coloration of varying strengths on head, mantle and inner wing-coverts. First-winter plumage is acquired by a moult of head and body feathers after fledging, during the late summer and early autumn; the juvenile wings and tail are retained throughout the first year. The Falmouth bird was aged as first-winter by the dusky-centred tertials, the dark tips to the outer tail feathers, the fact that the pale wing panels were not as prominent as on adults, and the thin subterminal dark bar on the inner secondaries: these are all features which would not be shown by an adult at any time of year. In juvenile and first-winter plumages, perhaps the best specific differences from Common and Arctic Terns of the same age are: (1) black eye-patches and (first-winter plumage only) grey nape; (2) rather long bill, evenly tapering from thick base to tip giving dagger or chisel shape; (3) upperwing pattern like Common Tern except for frosty or whitish panel across outer greater coverts, primaries and primary coverts, and faint dusky (not prominent blackish) carpal bar on leading edge of inner wing; (4) underwing pattern like Common Tern, with ill-defined

26. Adult winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, USA, October 1979 (*J. B. Dunnell*)





27. Winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, U.S.A., October 1979 (N. Boicman)

dusky trailing edge to outer primaries; (5) tail grey with white outer web of outer feather and dusky terminal spots on outer three or four pairs of feathers; and (6) legs noticeably long when perched, longer than on Common Tern. The adult shares the same bill-shape and leg-length differences, and throughout the year has white underparts, a striking white panel on the primaries (much more prominent than on first-years), and grey tail with white sides. The cap is black in summer, but a black mask and a grey nape is acquired in winter. Adults acquire winter plumage by a complete moult in autumn prior to their southward migration; summer plumage is acquired by a head and body moult in spring.



28 & 29. First-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, U.S.A., August 1980 (E. J. Mackrill)

Robbins *et al.* (1966) described Forster's Tern as a marsh tern 'common in fresh and salt marshes, rare on coastal beaches'. It has a patchy and widespread distribution in North America, north to the prairie provinces of Canada, south to California and east to Wisconsin. On the eastern seaboard, it occurs north to Maryland and south to Texas. It winters in the west from California south to Guatemala and in the east from Virginia south into the Gulf of Mexico.

Considering the Falmouth bird's initially elusive appearances, it seems unlikely that it arrived in British waters at the end of January 1980. It is possible that it was a victim of the severe gales of December 1979, or it may have arrived in the previous autumn along with other Nearctic vagrants, remaining undetected until the following January.

This record has been accepted by the Rarities Committee and by the BOU Records Committee as the first for Britain and Ireland. The only



30. Adult summer Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, USA, March 1980 (*David Tomlinson*)
previous European record was of a male, probably an adult, taken in the Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland, on 22nd October 1959 (A. Petersen *per* Robert Hudson *in litt.*).

31. First-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, USA, February 1980 (*J. B. & S. Bottomley*)



Summary

A first-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* was seen in the Falmouth area of Cornwall from 29th January to 18th March 1980. It may have arrived in December or even earlier.

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B. Cave, 83 Marlborough Road, Falmouth, Cornwall

Woodpigeons and Black Kites nesting in close proximity



A. P. E. Cain, N. Hillgarth and J. A. Valverde

In May and June 1972, we investigated some factors we considered would be associated with nest-site choice by Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* and Black Kites *Milvus migrans* nesting close to each other in a wood of stone pines *Pinus pinea* in the Coto Doñana, southwest Spain. We measured the distances between all nests of both species and their distances from the edge of the wood and from the nearest pine, and counted the number of pines between neighbouring nests of both species. Our preliminary report (Cain & Hillgarth 1974) prompted a letter by Collar (1978) which included an interpretation of our data based on our own tentative suggestions.

This paper presents a more rigorous analysis: to clarify the factors associated with nest-site choice by these two species, interpret their significance and discuss the points raised by Collar's interpretation.

Results

The numbers of pigeon nests were significantly correlated with (1) distance from Black Kite nests and (2) distance from neighbouring Woodpigeon nests (fig. 1), (3) distance from the edge of the wood and (4) from the

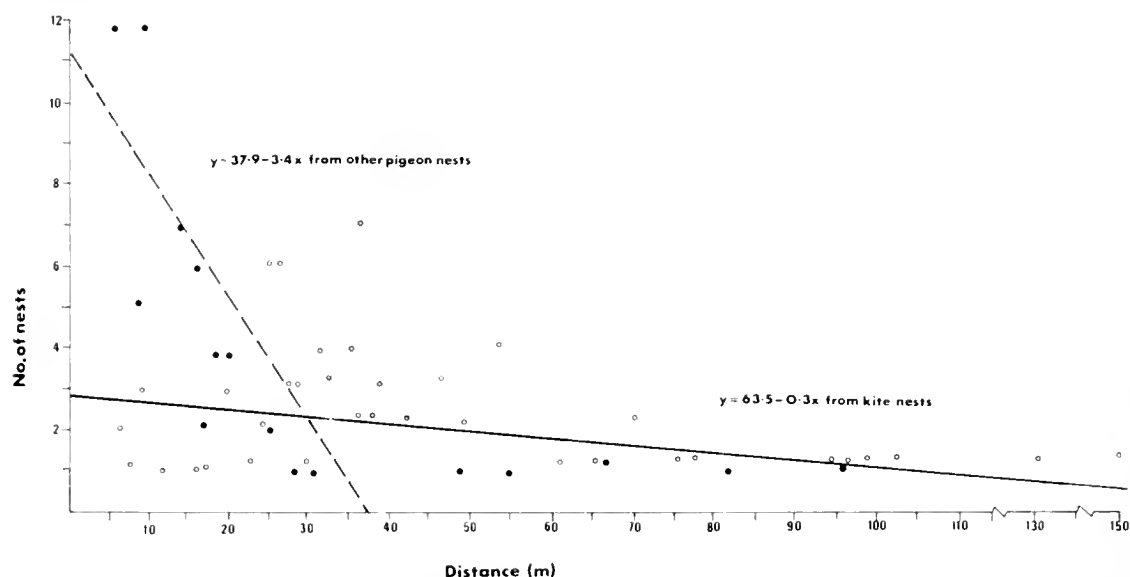


Fig. 1. Distances of nests of Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* from neighbouring nests of other pigeons and from nests of Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, Coto Doñana, Spain, 1972. Numbers of nests are significantly correlated in both cases: with distance from other pigeon nests ($r = -0.48$, $N = 24$, $P < 0.02$), and with distance from kite nests ($r = -0.34$, $N = 48$, $P < 0.02$)

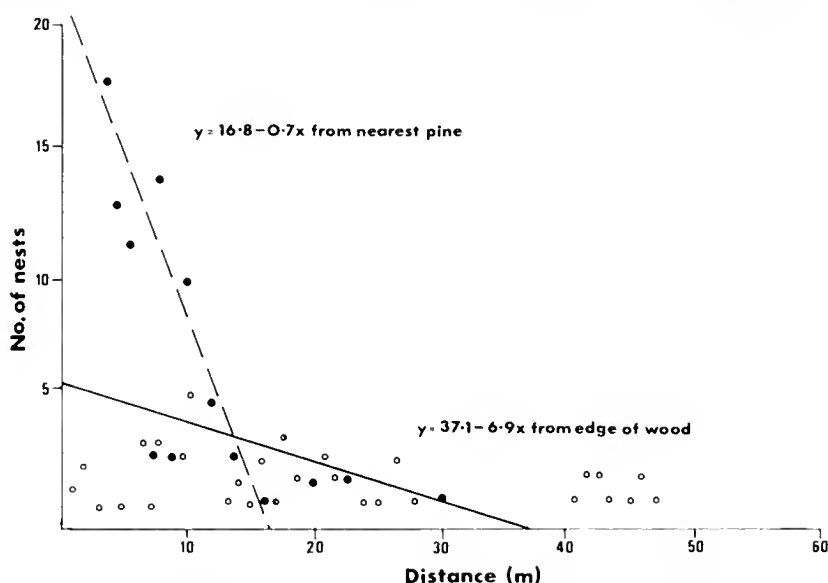


Fig. 2. Distances of nests of Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* from nearest stone pine *Pinus pinea* and from edge of wood, Coto Doñana, Spain, 1972. Numbers of nests are significantly correlated in both cases: with distance from nearest pine ($r = -0.54$, $N = 12$, $P < 0.05$), and with distance from edge of wood ($r = -0.43$, $N = 50$, $P < 0.01$)

nearest pine (fig. 2), and (5) the number of pines between them and the nearest kite nests (fig. 3). The numbers of kite nests were significantly correlated with the numbers of pines between them and neighbouring nests of other Black Kites (fig. 3).

The regressions suggest that most Woodpigeons chose nest-sites within 64m of neighbouring kite nests, 37m of neighbouring pigeon nests and the wood's edge, and 16.5m of the nearest pine; and had one to three pines

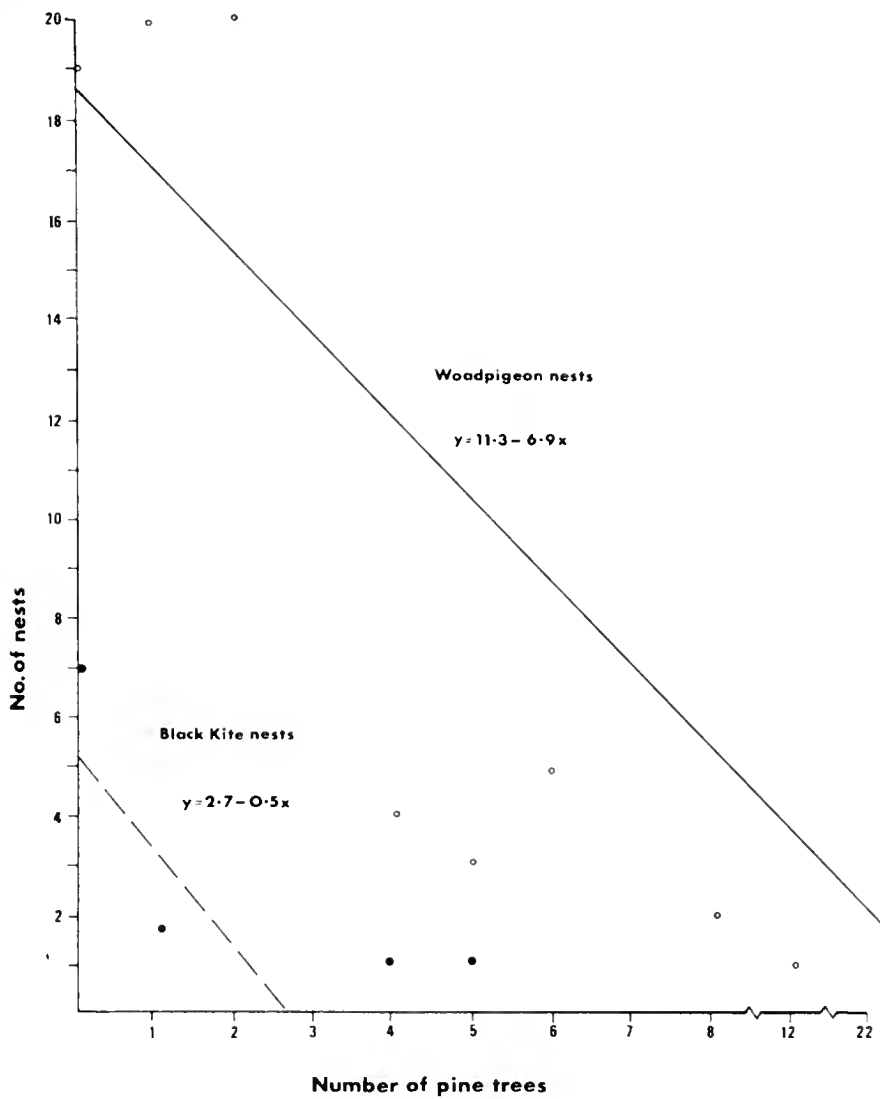


Fig. 3. Numbers of nests of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* with number of stone pines *Pinus pinea* between them and neighbouring kite nests, Coto Doñana, Spain, 1972. Significant correlations are shown with number of pigeon nests and number of pines between them and nearest kite nests ($r = -0.7$, $N = 9$, $P < 0.02$); and with number of kite nests and number of pines between them and neighbouring kite nests ($r = -0.96$, $N = 10$, $P < 0.01$).

between them and neighbouring pigeon nests. Most Black Kites chose sites with no pines growing between them and neighbouring kite nests.

Discussion

Our analysis suggests that Woodpigeons, in choosing nest-sites, were influenced by attraction for Black Kite nests (factor 1), attraction for other Woodpigeon nests (factor 2), the edge of the nesting habitat (factor 3), a space surrounding their nests obstructed by pine foliage (factor 4), and the amount of foliage between them and kite nests (factor 5). The kites appeared to be influenced by a clear space surrounding their nests, unobstructed by foliage and allowing a clear view of neighbouring kite nests.

A map of nest-sites (fig. 4) corresponds strikingly with the results of this analysis: showing the pigeon nests distributed in dense clusters around the kite nests. The importance of attraction for kite nests, rather than other

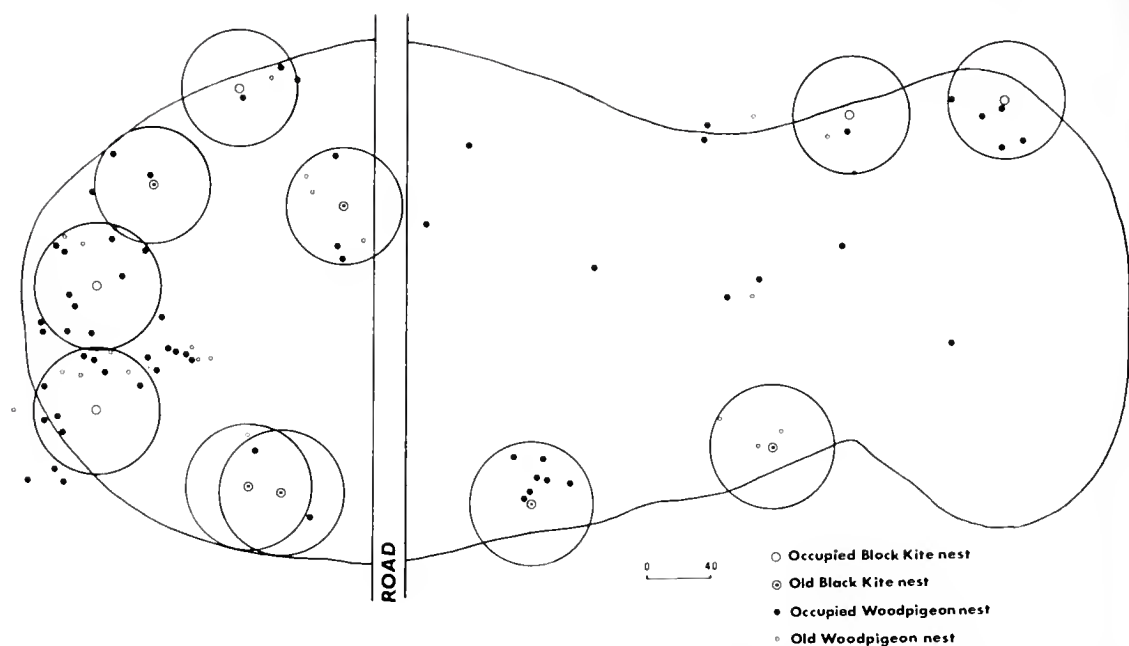


Fig. 4. Locations of occupied and old nests of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* in wood of stone pines *Pinus pinea*, Coto Doñana, Spain, 1972. Large circles have 40-m radius from each kite nest

pigeon nests, as an explanation of this distribution is suggested by the 26 (39.5%) nests located relatively far from the clusters and not surrounded by other pigeon nests (see Cain & Hillgarth 1974). Thus, although our analysis supports other evidence that Woodpigeons are social nesters (see Murton 1965), if this were the only factor associated with nest-site choice in this case, clusters of nests might be expected in the remoter regions of the wood around the isolated nests.

The factors associated with habitat topography (factors 3, 4 and 5 above, and that associated with nest-site choice by Black Kites) appear not to be as important as interspecific attraction, as the topography was uniform throughout the wood. Also, our map revealed major sections of the wood's edge with no nests of either species.

The lack of any association of Black Kite nests with distance from Woodpigeon nests suggests an unlikelihood that kites gain any benefits from a nesting association, but it may disprove mutual interspecific attraction as a cause of the association. This contradicts one of our original suggestions, repeated by Collar (1978), that Black Kites benefit by relating noise from disturbed pigeons to danger; and another, which Collar implied, that the nesting association confers mutual benefits. Contrary to Collar's theory, we did not suggest that pigeons are protected by the kites' territorial aggression towards nest-despoilers; territorial aggression by these kites towards other Black Kites has been observed by Mountfort (1958), but not towards potential nest-despoilers such as Magpies *Pica pica*, which are abundant in the area. In fact, the association of Black Kite nest-sites with a clear view around the nest, suggested by our present analysis, could assist territorial defence. What we did suggest, and which Collar did not mention, was that the nesting association reduced the chances of predation on Woodpigeons by Black Kites. Although Valverde (1967) confirmed that these two species form a predator-prey interaction, he could not show that

more than five of 16 Woodpigeon remains collected from kite nests were eaten as carrion: the successful hunting of live Woodpigeons by Black Kites cannot be disproved. The effects on levels of predation of territorial aggression among the kites and of concealment of pigeon nests by foliage could, therefore, be important. Like many other nesting associations between predators and their prey (Durango 1949), this one appears to be commensalistic, the predator-prey interaction being influenced in favour of the prey, or weaker, species.

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Timing of bathing, dusting and sunning



J. M. Stainton

This study developed from examination of variations between bird species in their bathing habits, fluctuating with season, time of day and weather. As work progressed, the incidence of dusting, and later of sunning, was included in an attempt to discover how either might relate to bathing in each species. The main part of the study covered seven years during

1967-74 and was carried out in St James's Park, Central London, an area of about 38 ha containing a long, narrow lake and hereinafter referred to as 'the Park'. After 1974, study continued at Ringwould, Kent, where surface water is limited and the different habitat provided a useful comparison.

Scope was necessarily limited to the above considerations. Actual movements and postures during activity have already been well described: for example, for bathing, by Simmons (1963) and Slessers (1970); for dusting, by the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, by Simmons (1954); and, for sunning, by Hauser (1957) and Mueller (1972). Nor was it practicable to observe the whole succession of maintenance activities: this is regretted particularly in the case of House Sparrows, where it would have been useful to look at the bathing, preening, oiling and dusting sequences.

For the same reasons, location—where birds bathed, dusted or sunned—is also largely omitted. Sites were numerous. A maximum of 14 bathing places might be used simultaneously in summer, some species tending to favour certain types of site or a particular place. Dusting was even more fluid: limited to one or two spots in winter, but occurring in summer on as many as 20 sites at any one time, choice being perhaps partly influenced by time of day. In the longer term, bathing places tended to alter with repairs to the verges or other works on the lake. Dusting sites varied as soil textures were affected by erosion, horticulture, and so on.

A complex situation became apparent involving a number of environmental conditions too detailed and too little understood to be included here. A few references and remarks are made below on dusting sites, but, apart from slight comment on bathing places (Slessers 1970) and sunning spots (Potter & Hauser 1974), there has been little discussion of these aspects in the literature. Topography of sites, and their varying use by different species, merits further work.

The study was confined to resident birds. Since it took no account of population fluctuations, seasonal distributions can be indicative only. Findings derive from observations in natural habitats where bathing, dusting and sunning occurred commonly. Sunshine seemed to be a major influence on bathing, and on dusting by House Sparrows, throughout the year; sunning was largely seasonal.

Method

In the Park birds, being protected, tend to be tame and tolerant of observation; natural predators are scarce. Numbers of birds bathing, dusting and sunning were counted over three or four years during hourly circuits of the lake. The six species which bathed in sufficient numbers to give some idea of their seasonal and hourly distributions were: feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*, Woodpigeon *C. palumbus*, House Sparrow, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos*. For the last three, the distribution of sunning was also established, as was that of dusting by House Sparrows.

The year was divided into six seasons as follows: 'midwinter', covering the shortest days, from third week of November to third week of January; 'late winter', ending with the spring equinox; 'spring', beginning with the

spring equinox; ‘midsummer’, comprising the longest days, from third week of May to that of July; ‘late summer’, running to the autumn equinox; and ‘autumn’, running from the autumn equinox.

In addition to subjective assessments of strength of wind, light and rain, readings were taken from a thermometer in the Park. Further information was obtained from Meteorological Office records.

Bathing

Seasonal and hourly distributions

Bathing continued throughout the year, with as much intensity in winter as in summer (fig. 1). The Woodpigeon distribution reflects in part a movement out of Central London in winter (Homes 1964), which may to some extent account for the peak in spring, when they also bathed with marked persistence, even in such weather (see below) as would normally seem to deter them; so, too, did feral Rock Doves in late summer, when, as shown, they bathed most.

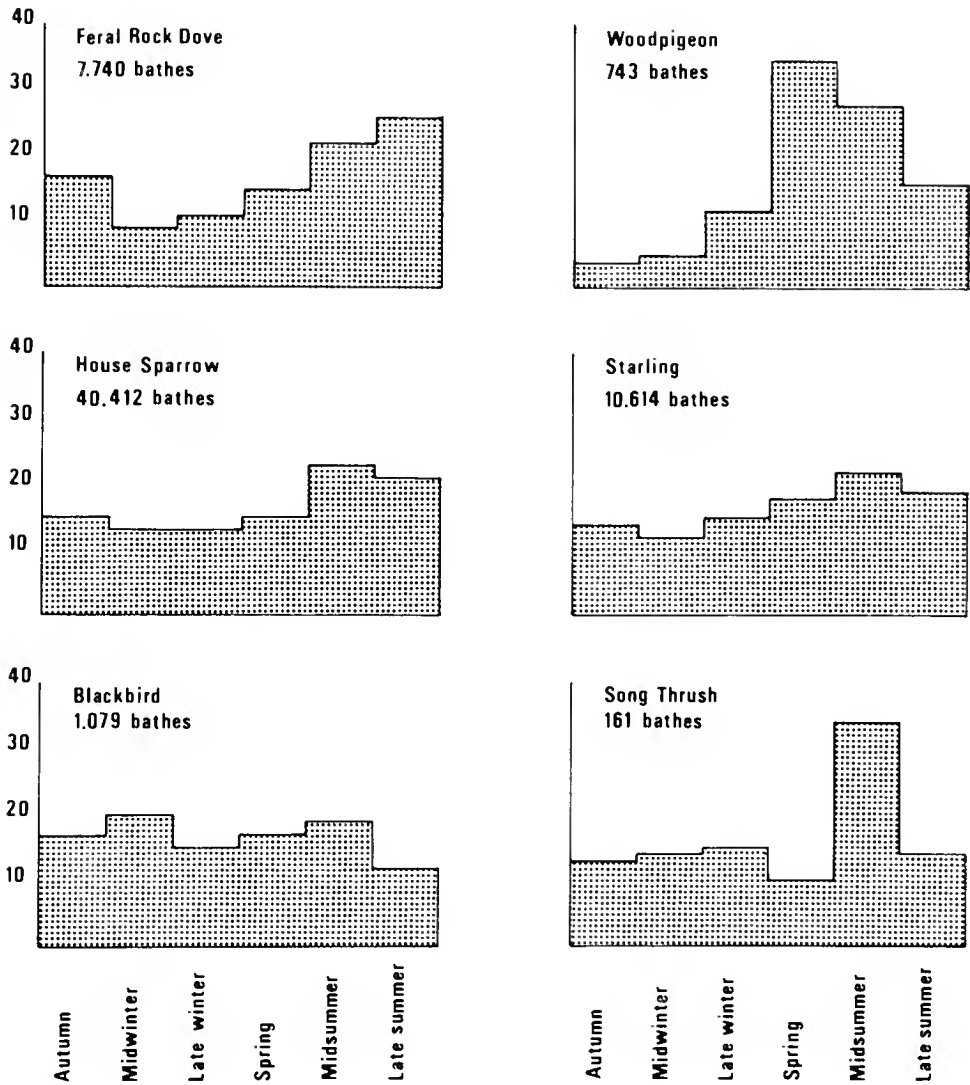


Fig. 1. Seasonal distribution (%) of bathing by feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*, Woodpigeon *C. palumbus*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos* in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

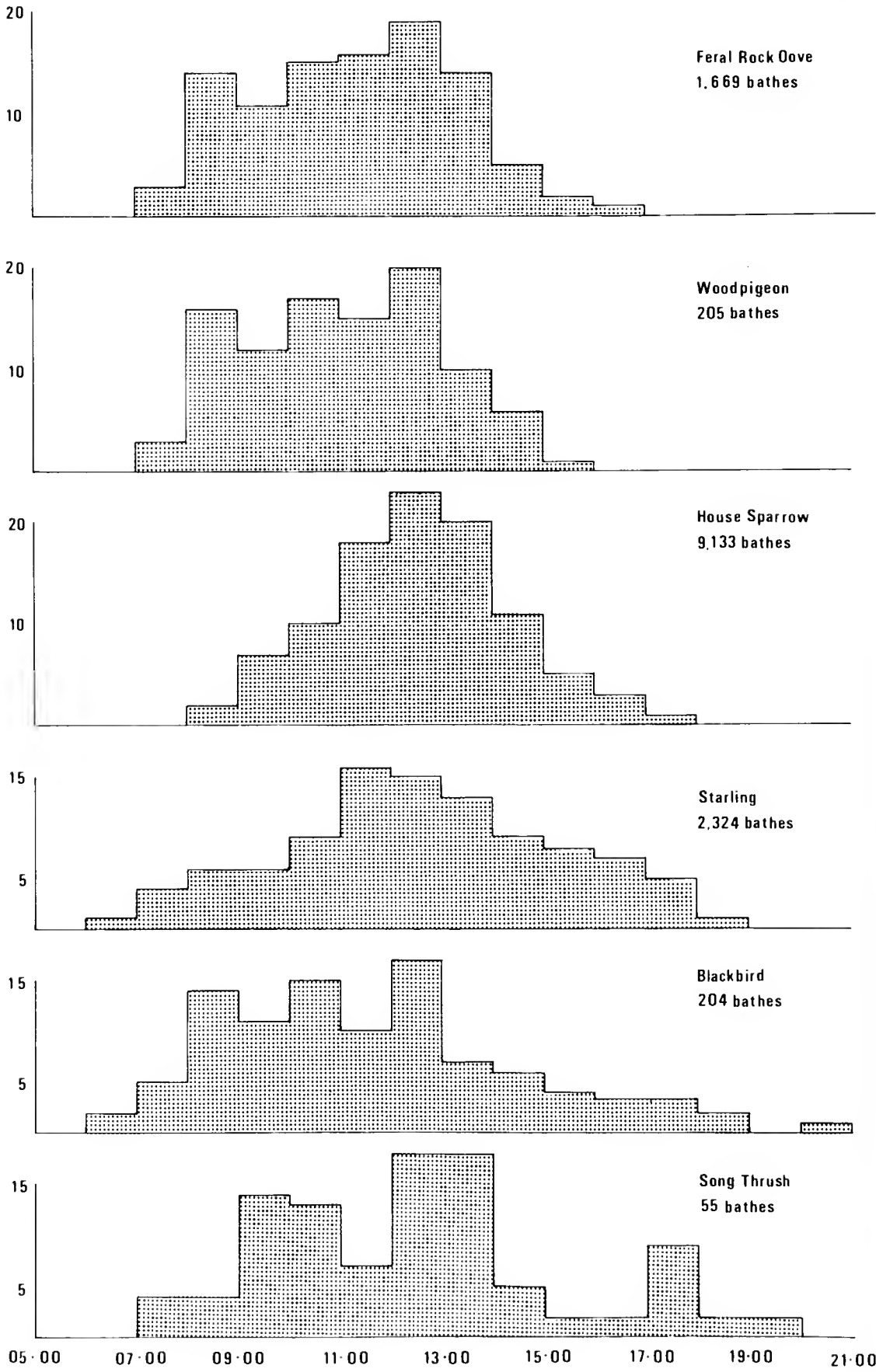


Fig. 2. Hourly distribution (%) of bathing by six species in midsummer (watches before 05.00 GMT and after 21.00 not shown) in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

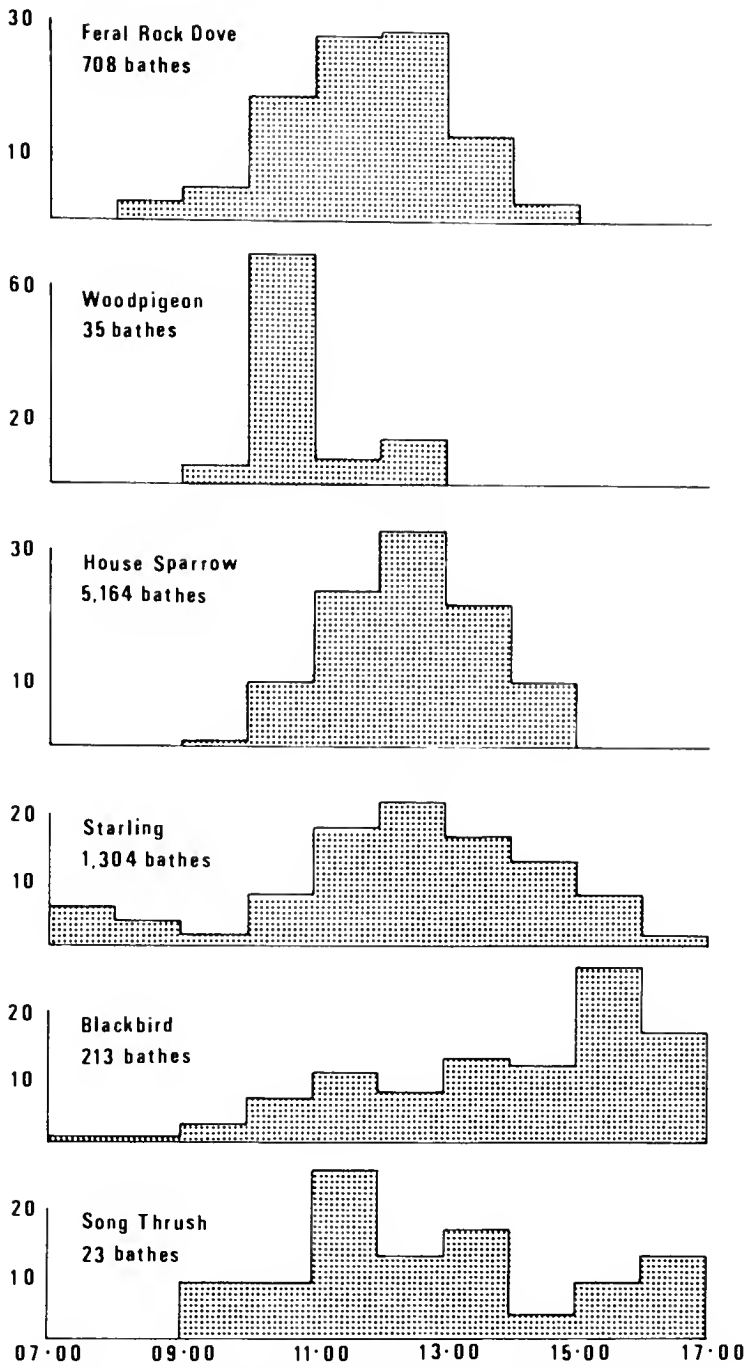


Fig. 3. Hourly distribution (%) of bathing by six species in midwinter in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

Figs. 2 & 3 show the hourly distributions of bathing in midsummer and midwinter respectively. As at other seasons, the two pigeons bathed most in the morning, and House Sparrows most in the afternoon; the change of habits by Blackbirds is, however, marked. In midsummer, House Sparrow bathing was not seen before 07.15 GMT or after 19.20, so was restricted to a period of some 12 hours. Starlings and Blackbirds began earlier, between 05.00 and 06.00, the last performances being seen 14-15 hours later, around 20.00 hours. In midwinter, the bathing of the last two might occur at any time within about nine hours after 07.30; no other species began bathing before 08.00 nor continued after 16.00.

The early peak for Starlings and the late one for Blackbirds (fig. 3) reflect a habit of bathing at twilight in winter. Starlings began before sunrise on

bright mornings, later on dark ones. After this, they bathed less for one or two hours (see fall between 08.00 and 10.00). On winter afternoons, Blackbird bathing increased as light faded, most being seen just before sunset on dark evenings, later on lighter ones. This twilight bathing occurred regularly, being attempted even when the lake froze. Eight of the 22 pigeon and passerine species which bathed in the Park did so at twilight, but only from September to April; exceptions were one or two Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus*, seen in late May or early June.

Influence of weather

LIGHT Bathing usually increased at the onset of sunshine, particularly after several days of overcast; by the second or third sunny day, it returned to normal or even low rates. Similarly, the first clouding would be followed by less activity, rising to usual levels when overcast persisted for days, typically sooner in the case of passerines than in that of pigeons. Fluctuations in bathing associated with changes in light values were regular, but not always immediately obvious. Bathing often began as overcast thinned or cloud cover broke. At other times, several minutes (up to half an hour if heavy rain had accompanied great loss of light) elapsed from the beginning of a sunny period to the beginning of bathing. Furthermore, an outburst of bathing, begun in sunshine, often continued for one or two minutes in overcast, and with great intensity before ceasing. Allowance had also to be made for the species' diurnal pattern of incidence (figs. 2 & 3): for instance, onset of sunshine in mid or late afternoon saw increased House Sparrow or Starling bathing, but seldom much from either of the pigeons. In summer, on the first sunny morning after overcast, pigeons might begin bathing from about 06.30 GMT onwards, but House Sparrows probably not till well after 08.00. Blackbirds were least predictable in their reactions to sunshine, and were little affected by heavy cloud cover.

Post-bathing behaviour was not studied in any detail, but it seemed that, while birds might not necessarily bathe at sunny spots, the two pigeons, House Sparrows and Starlings generally moved into a sunny place to preen after bathing. The two thrushes usually went into cover and preened in shade, if only initially.

WIND Bathing by passerines was minimal in strong or gusty wind; but, in moderate strength wind, they bathed in partial shelter. The pigeons were less ready to bathe when it was windy, particularly in cool weather or with a cold breeze. Bathing did occur in calm conditions, but, on warm days with intermittent draughts, activity often ceased in lulls, but resumed with the breeze at whichever site became exposed. After bathing, passerines usually perched in a current of air and then preened.

TEMPERATURE At moderate levels, temperature seemed unimportant (although reduced activity might follow a sudden fall), but thermoregulation may have been a factor in the switches to sheltered or sunny sites when it was chilly, or to more exposed ones when it was warm. Little bathing was seen, even in sunshine, when the thermometer first fell below about 2°C, but rather more might occur by the fourth or fifth cold day. Blackbirds bathed

at -3°C . There are many accounts in the literature of bathing in snow. This was not seen in the Park, but Starlings sometimes broke through thin ice in order to bathe, and feral Rock Doves bathed in flood water on ice. At the other extreme, heat also seemed to deter bathing, particularly in calm conditions with a heat-hazed sky; on other hot days with a clear sun and a fresh breeze, fairly normal activity might ensue. Falls in temperature from above some 26°C down to about 21°C appeared to stimulate bathing.

RAIN During rain, bathing was usually sparse. House Sparrows were least prone to bathe in precipitation, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes more ready to do so (table 1). House Sparrows—the smallest of the six species studied—normally bathed only in fine rain, as did the other small species: Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, and Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*. The other, larger, birds sometimes bathed in moderate down-pours. Bathing in rain occurred mostly in places sheltered by overhanging branches. With changeable weather, all except House Sparrows tended to bathe most when sun and rain coincided, and far less in the alternating dry and overcast conditions. In periods of unbroken cloud, with intermittent rain, the sparse bathing seemed unaffected by drier or wetter conditions. Above a given density, rain itself may have been a deterrent; below such a level, the losses of light and heat usually associated with precipitation may themselves have deterred. Even so, unaccountable outbursts of bathing by the two thrushes sometimes followed increased weight of downpour, often in unusual places, including newly formed puddles beside the lake.

Table 1. Frequency of bathing in standing water during rainfall in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

Species	No. of baths	% in rain
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	40,412	0.2
Feral Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	7,740	0.7
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	10,614	1.3
Woodpigeon <i>C. palumbus</i>	743	1.7
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	1,079	2.8
Song Thrush <i>T. philomelos</i>	161	6.2

DROUGHT The summer of 1976 was hot and dry. In Ringwould, the effect of the drought—the only serious one to occur during the study period—was unexpected. This village lies on quick-draining chalk soil in an area of low rainfall, with standing water only in artefacts and rainwater puddles. Three of the former have been watched regularly since 1975. One, under daily observation, was a small pond in the garden, where water soon became dirty. Normally, bathing increased here as puddles dried; it also tended to occur soon after a shower or other addition of water. Bathing decreased markedly, however, between late June and early August 1976. Birds continued to visit the pond, sometimes drinking, but seldom bathing; most approaches were made when extra water had been poured in, but activity was seen chiefly when the pond had been cleaned out and refilled. The other two sites—a self-filling cattle-trough with an overflow, and a small raised birdbath which soon dried out and was replenished daily—were less affected, but bathing was still below normal.

The above suggests that the pond water may have become noxious. Such had been the case in the Park during a warm spell in the late summer of 1969, with high mortality among waterfowl, pigeons and passerines due to botulism and possibly blue-green algal poisoning (Keymer *et al.* 1972). Apart from such hazards, predator pressure must increase as opportunities for bathing diminish with drought.

Characteristics of bathing

Numbers bathing varied greatly from day to day, less so in summer than in winter. Dry, sunny, mild to warm weather, with light wind, appeared to be optimum conditions, judging by the regular activity seen in such circumstances. Little activity was recorded at the onset of wet, overcast, cold weather; later, however, more performances were seen. The greatest outbursts of bathing occurred in winter, sometimes in conditions only marginally less cold or heavily clouded than on previous days. So, within certain limits, the important factor appeared to be previous rather than current weather conditions. In effect, if adverse weather inhibited activity, then birds would tend either to bathe later than usual that day or earlier than normal on the next, even appearing to delay for several days in severe conditions, thus swelling the numbers when they ultimately did so.

Generally, it seemed that, if there was an habitual need to bathe periodically, then this would not necessarily be constant at all seasons within a species, nor between species. For instance, the two pigeons may normally have needed to bathe less frequently than the passerines, since often they did so surprisingly little on days when the others were doing so freely.

Table 2 shows counts made around midday on four consecutive days in August. This illustrates some of the points made above and includes instances of those changes in light values which, although slight, and often brief, nevertheless seem significant. For instance, on 22nd August, feral Rock Doves, lethargic for over four hours until 13.30 GMT, rather late in their bathing day, nevertheless engaged in a surge of activity when the sun shone. House Sparrows had already been bathing freely, but more did so in

Table 2. Numbers of birds bathing each hour, or part hour, on four days in August, in St James's Park, London

Date	Time (GMT)	Hrs	Feral Rock Dove	Wood-pigeon	House Sparrow	Starling	Black-bird	Total	Temp (°C)	Light, wind, rain
19th	13.00	1.0	16	0	93	11	2	122	27.2	Clear sun
19th	14.00	0.4	10	0	47	3	0	60	27.5	Clear sun
19th	14.24	0.6	1	0	6	0	0	7	—	Hazed sun
19th	15.00	1.0	1	0	12	0	0	13	27.7	Heavier haze
20th	11.00	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.5	Overcast, slight
20th	12.00	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	1	16.5	rain throughout
21st	12.20	0.7	4	0	57	10	0	71	18.0	Overcast, cool north
21st	13.00	1.0	0	0	46	4	0	50	18.0	wind throughout
22nd	09.00	1.0	1	0	0	0	0	1	17.2	Overcast
22nd	10.00	1.0	3	0	3	5	0	11	18.0	Overcast
22nd	11.00	1.0	0	0	24	5	0	29	18.0	Overcast
22nd	12.00	1.0	2	1	85	7	0	95	18.2	Overcast
22nd	13.00	0.5	0	0	33	5	1	39	—	Overcast
22nd	13.30	0.2	19	1	130	0	0	150	19.0	Hazy sun
22nd	13.40	0.3	0	1	17	2	0	20	—	Heavier haze, brief spatter of rain

ten minutes of hazy sunshine than in the previous 90 minutes, as did Woodpigeons or Starlings at other times and places. This, apparent, additional factor of 'sun hunger' either accelerated the periodic bathing or stimulated additional performances, probably the former. Such reactions to sunshine appeared to be most pronounced in the cases of the pigeons and House Sparrows, but less certain in Blackbirds and Song Thrushes.

Dusting

Seasonal and hourly distributions

Dusting by House Sparrows was more seasonal than bathing (fig. 4): in summer, typically performed with great boldness and energy, but, in winter, nervously and hesitantly.

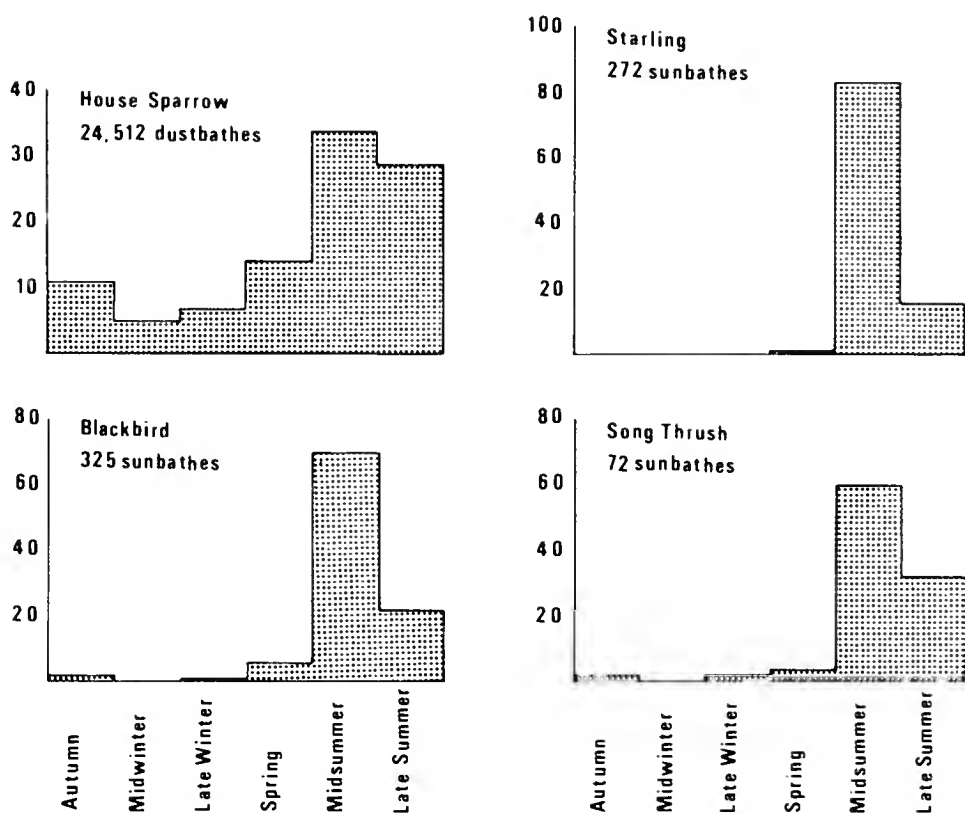


Fig. 4. Seasonal distribution (%) of dusting and sunning by four species in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

There was little pre-noon activity in midwinter (fig. 5). In summer, dusting usually started earlier. At all seasons, it continued later than did bathing, in midsummer occurring from 05.30-20.03 (much the same as the bathing span of Starlings and Blackbirds).

Influence of weather

LIGHT Most dusting was seen in sunny spots, facing south. The exposed parts of any place were generally more used than the shaded ones, particularly in the morning, but on warm afternoons as much activity occurred in shade as in sun. Outbursts of dusting which directly followed increases of light were common in the afternoon, when bathing was waning or had ceased. Such fluctuations continued until after 19.00 in summer or near sunset in winter, although the sun's warmth was by then minimal. Around

noon, however, it appeared that the immediate reaction to sunshine was an outburst of bathing; only belatedly was it apparent that more wet birds were coming in to dust. Preening during and after dusting tended to occur in radiation rather than in shade.

WIND Wind seemed to repress dusting more than it did bathing, but, on warm days, breezy sites were likely to be used.

TEMPERATURE While the seasonal distribution of dusting (fig. 4) partly reflects a frequent lack of dry earth in winter, that available was little used. The activity did occur at temperatures down to 2°C; even so, more was seen in autumn than in late winter, and more in late summer than in spring, suggesting that cold might be a deterrent, average ground and air temperatures being lower in the first part of the year than the last. In hot weather, perhaps upwards of 25°C, most dusting was seen on north-facing slopes. It decreased on warm, calm, afternoons, some birds then lying passively on dusting sites or, with sunshine, switching into and out of sunning postures. All this may indicate a preference for moderate ground and air temperatures.

RAIN At peak times in summer, dusting was occasionally seen when light rain fell, and sometimes in moist soil. Given dry earth, activity might soon recur after rain in summer; in winter, little would be seen for a day or so (perhaps not for several days) after snow.

Characteristics of dusting

Dusting was typically frequent and protracted in summer; brief and hesitant in winter, sometimes not seen for weeks on end. House Sparrows were more selective in choice of sites in winter than in summer, with regard to type of soil and of situation (usually under overhanging branches in winter). Other species, too, tend to favour particular soils or situations (Campbell 1954, Hein 1970).

Particularly around noon, many birds dusted after bathing; early and probably late in the day, however, they did not. On summer mornings, dusting regularly began before bathing. Figs. 5 & 2 show differences in patterns of incidence: in midsummer, 25% of the dusting was before 11.00 and 40% after 14.00, compared with 19% and 20% respectively for bathing. By late afternoon, therefore, few birds were likely to have bathed immediately before dusting, if at all that day. Moreover, the swiftness with which dusting fluctuated with weather changes suggested that it was these, rather than any previous activity, which then influenced performances. Table 3 shows activity on three consecutive days in August. On 4th and 6th, there were atypical rises in rates of dusting in late afternoon, a time when, normally, these would fall (distributions of dusting in late summer closely resembled those of midsummer: fig. 5). On 6th, increased activity after 17.00 seems to point to the force of 'sun hunger', as this coincided with the first clear sunshine since 4th, but on 4th there had been a similar upsurge of dusting after 15.00. The situation then was more complex. After the cloud-cover broke, performances tended to follow the intermittent increases of light; the same happened whenever and wherever the fitful breeze blew lightly at any one of the ten or so widely dispersed sites used by the birds.

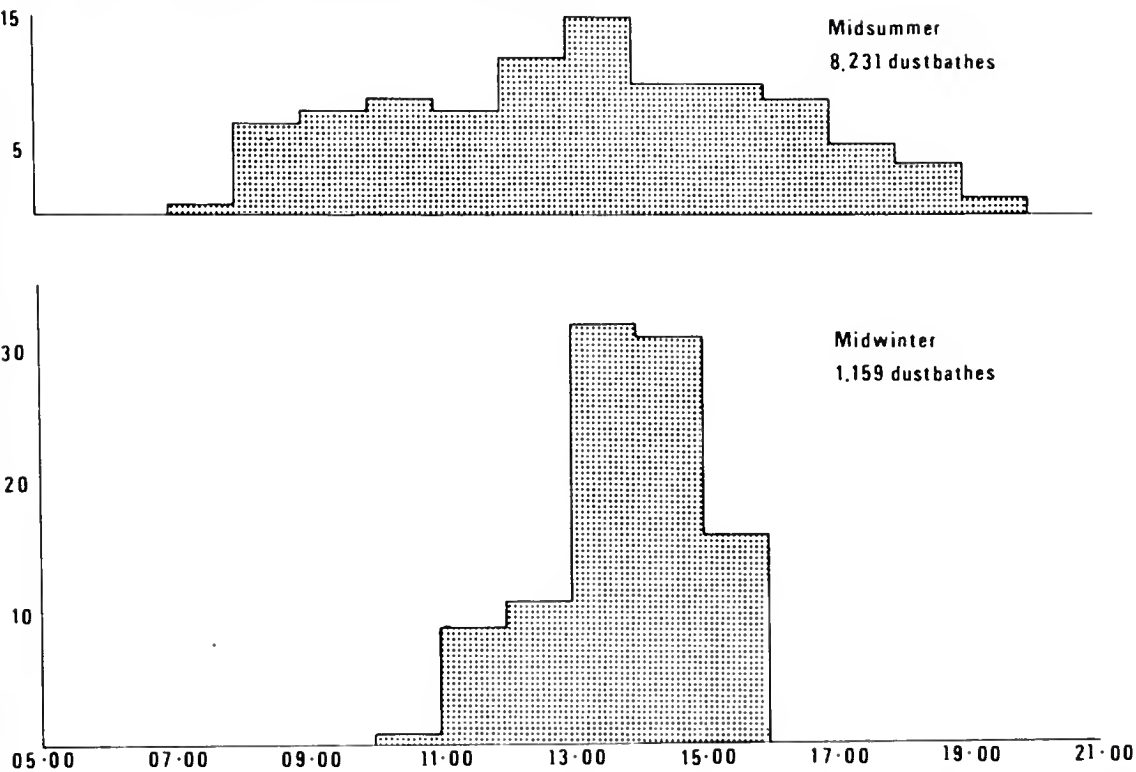


Fig. 5. Hourly distribution (%) of dusting by birds in midsummer and midwinter (watches before 05.00 GMT and after 21.00 not shown) in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

Table 3. Numbers of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* dusting each hour on three days in August in St James's Park, London

Date	Time (GMT)	Nos.	Temp. (°C)	Light, wind, rain
4th	14.00	16	21	Sunny morning, cloud increasing and light diminishing by 11.50, 10/10 overcast by 13.20; cloud cover thinned again by 14.00, hazy sun showing at times; breeze light and fitful
4th	15.00	51	20	
4th	16.00	59	20	
5th	09.00	4	18	Overcast, intermittent rain all day; earth dry under trees; very light wind
5th	10.00	4	18	
5th	11.00	1	17.8	
6th	15.00	25	16	Dry by 13.15 after intermittent rain earlier; cloud began to thin, light increasing steadily; clear sun from about 15.40; gusty wind
6th	16.00	36	17	
6th	17.00	59	18	

Even in summer, it was usual for dusting to be sparse on cool, cloudy, mornings. On such days, conditions which had first seemed repressive appeared to become less so as time went by, and a moderate amount of dusting might eventually occur. On the whole, such increases after earlier delays did not seem to be carried forward from one day to another as happened in the case of bathing, except in so far as more bathing would be followed by more dusting. Thus, if House Sparrows have a periodic need to dust, this seems to be limited to summertime and then possibly only within the day. Borchelt *et al.* (1973) found that dusting activity by Bobwhite Quails *Colinus virginianus* increased after they had been deprived of dust for several days: dusting is presumably habitual in this species.

Sunning

Seasonal and hourly distributions

Sunning was highly seasonal, little or none occurring in winter (as for resident species in USA: Potter & Hauser 1974). Starlings were not seen to sun between mid September and April; Song Thrushes not between late September and February; Blackbirds performed in each month except January. Midsummer was the peak season (fig. 4): 82% of all sunning activity occurred in the 12 midsummer weeks from 11th May to 2nd August, with only 0.1% in the 12 midwinter weeks from 10th November to 1st February. Much high-intensity sunning was seen in summer; from autumn to spring, postures were less marked, birds tending to be alert and nervous so that activity was seldom protracted.

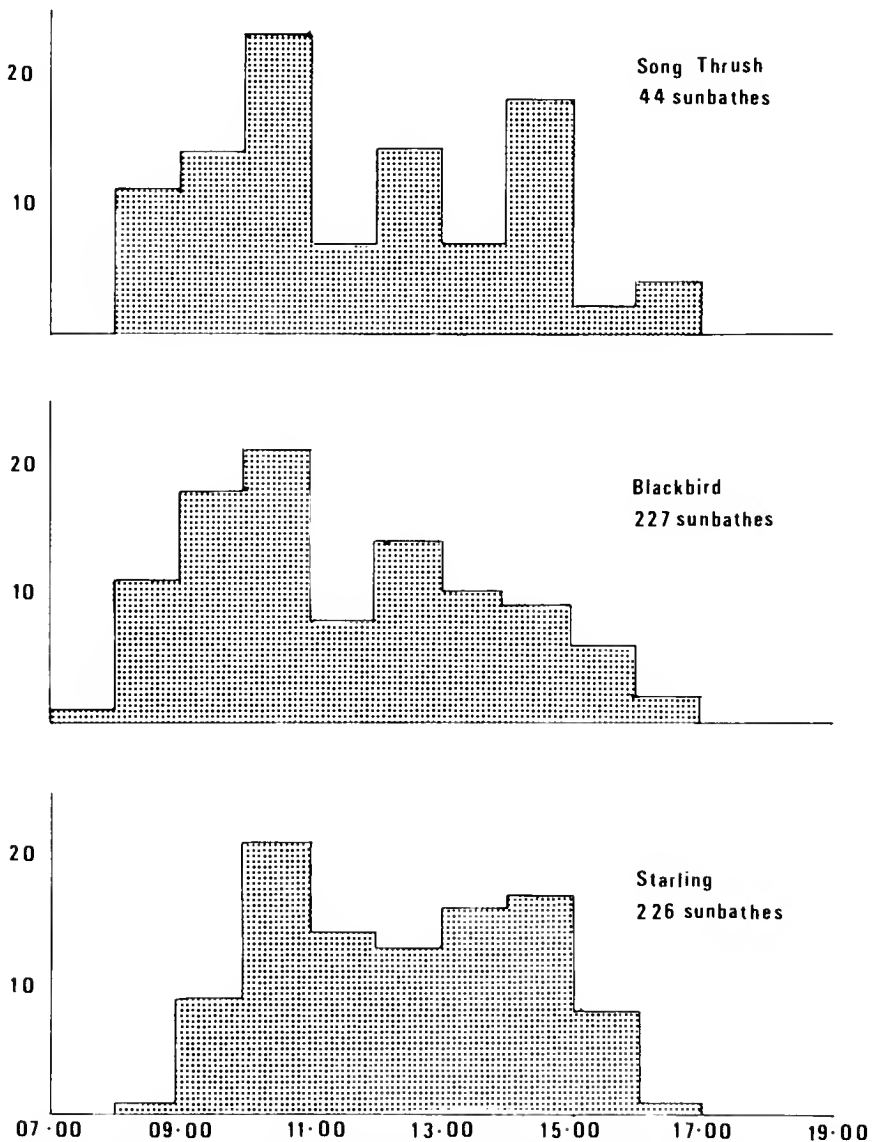


Fig. 6. Hourly distribution (%) of sunning by three species in midsummer (watches before 07.00 GMT and after 19.00 not shown) in St James's Park, London, during 1967-74

Fig. 6 shows the diurnal pattern of sunning in the midsummer season. The duration was short compared with that of bathing or dusting. As indicated, Starlings and Song Thrushes sunned only within nine hours of 08.00; so, too, did Blackbirds in May and July, but over an 11-hour period

(07.20-18.15) in June. From September to April, sunning occurred only between 10.00 and 13.59 hours.

Influence of weather

LIGHT Most sunning took place in bright sunshine, sometimes in rather hazy conditions. In summer (but not apparently at other times), most occurred on days when sunshine prevailed, particularly when previous days had also been sunny. In these circumstances, sensitivity to small changes in values of bright light was sometimes noticeable in the Park and at Ringwould. Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Robins and Dunnocks sometimes switched out of, and back into, sunning postures with minor gains and losses of light (e.g. when a clear sun was briefly dimmed by a small cloud glowing with reflected light). Table 4 shows June as the month of highest averages of sunshine in London (December, with 40 hours, being the lowest). The sun's elevation in the sky—greatest in midsummer, least in midwinter—may also be significant.

Table 4. Climatological data for May to September in Florida, North Carolina and London

Place and latitude	Month	TEMPERATURE (°C)		PRECIPITATION (MM)		HOURS OF BRIGHT SUNSHINE	
		Average max.	Daily min.	Average monthly fall	Max. fall in 24 hrs	Average monthly duration	Average % of possible
Florida: Jacksonville 30° 25'N	May	30	18	89	101	288	70
	June	32	22	160	149	252	62
	July	33	23	196	127	254	59
	Aug.	33	23	175	116	243	61
	Sep.	31	22	193	192	174	54
North Carolina: Raleigh 35° 52'N	May	26	13	89	110	268	66
	June	30	18	94	127	282	65
	July	31	20	140	123	303	63
	Aug.	31	19	132	113	269	60
	Sep.	28	16	99	132	219	60
London: Kew 51° 28'N	May	17	8	46	25	199	41
	June	20	12	45	36	213	43
	July	22	13	57	60	198	39
	Aug.	21	13	59	56	188	41
	Sep.	18	11	49	46	142	37

WIND Given shelter, wind was not necessarily a deterrent. Starlings occasionally sunned in a very light breeze, but Blackbirds would break off or move to shelter if caught by the slightest air movement.

TEMPERATURE Blackbirds and Song Thrushes were not seen to sun at temperatures below 7°C, Starlings not below 13°C. Comparison of distributions of sunning in late summer and in spring (fig. 4) suggests a bias towards warmer weather. Above about 18°C, temperature, however, appeared unimportant: on the six days when most sunning was seen, it ranged from 18-30°C.

RAIN Sunning was seldom seen directly after rain. It increased in dry weather in summer.

Characteristics of sunning

The thrushes and Starlings usually adopted postures clearly recognisable as those described in the literature. Mueller (1972) summarised these as 'those behavior sequences involving exaggerated, stereotyped postures held for a relatively prolonged time': these postures were broadly of two kinds, that is with both wings spread or with one wing raised. He suggested that the term 'sunbathing' be restricted to these two categories (the term 'sunning' is used in this paper in the same sense as 'sunbathing'). Other forms of behaviour, which Mueller related to heat conservation, were termed 'basking' (birds perched in the sun without assuming any extraordinary posture) and 'heat bathing' (birds using smoke or heat from chimneys).

Hauser (1957) suggested that there were two reasons for the assumption of sunning postures. First, there was 'Voluntary, or normal, sun-bathing: an attitude assumed by a bird apparently for reasons of health and well-being, accompanied by preening, shaking, scratching and repeated resumption of the sun-bathing posture.' Secondly, there was a 'Compulsory Sun Position, the same attitude assumed when a bird is suddenly and apparently unexpectedly exposed to direct sunlight, under more or less extreme conditions of humidity and heat. This response . . . appears to be unpremeditated and irresistible.' While it had seemed impracticable to try to make the above distinctions when working in the Park, hindsight suggests that rarely, if ever, was a bird suspected to be assuming a 'Compulsory Sun Position'. Nothing like the high temperature levels recorded by Hauser (see below) were, however, encountered during this study.

In the Park and at Ringwould, most sunning occurred when the sun was highest in the sky, both seasonally and diurnally, in the months of highest averages of sunshine and (within seasonal limits) in settled, sunny, dry weather. The last conditions obtained on the six days when 20 or more birds sunned in the Park. Five of these fell within three weeks of midsummer day; the sixth was 15th August, when 20 birds sunned in six hours, thus giving, at 3.3, the lowest hourly average, though the weather then seemed at least as favourable as on the other five days. The highest average (19 per hour) was reached on 21st June, when 114 birds sunned in six hours, this being about one-sixth of the total numbers (669) recorded in three years.

It is perhaps significant that the sunshine on 21st June, while not appearing very bright, was less hazed than on 20th, which had followed a cloudy day on 19th, preceded by six sunny days. There were two or three other instances in June and July when a sunny, dry spell, briefly interrupted by a rainshower or a day or so of overcast, was followed by an outburst of sunning. Conceivably, this and the other changes in behaviour signified that an apparently casual activity might become habitual in some circumstances in summer.

Other responses to sunshine

Sunning behaviour of the pigeons and House Sparrows was difficult to define. Groups of feral Rock Doves or Woodpigeons were often seen lying in a sunny place, basking most of the time, but with individuals tending to

change into and out of sunning postures; so quick and frequent were the changes that resulting difficulties of categorisation and counting led to the pigeons' sunning being omitted from this part of the study. So too was that of House Sparrows, where rather similar behaviour was seen. In summer, they often lay passively on dusting sites until the sun emerged; then, most would begin to dust and preen, perhaps a few sunning briefly. In winter, and with bright sunshine, they sometimes flew to dusting sites after bathing and performed dusting movements in dry leaves or on damp, compacted, earth. Generally, an onset of sunlight was more likely to be followed by bathing or dusting than by sunning.

Social facilitation

Both Gerber (1967) and Crook (1961) referred to the force of imitative behaviour in bathing, as did Simmons (1954) describing House Sparrows' dusting. Undoubtedly this was a feature in all three activities considered here. Crook also pointed out, however, that, in any flock activity, the mood of the individual might not always accord with that of the others: among a bathing group, some might be found preening without having previously bathed. He suggested that this was because they were not sufficiently motivated for actual bathing to develop.

Similar incidents were seen in the Park, particularly in favourable conditions in summer, when the few birds in a bathing party abstaining from the activity were assumed to be lacking the incentive either of periodic need or of 'sun hunger'. With inclement weather, however, neither incentive might be strong enough to initiate performance. For instance, on cold winter afternoons, House Sparrows sometimes hung around the shore, not bathing until Blackbirds or Starlings had done so. In many instances, such as the ten-minute outbreak of bathing on 22nd August (table 2), it is unlikely that imitative behaviour alone could operate so abruptly and briefly, but no doubt it contributed to the synchronisation and spatial grouping.

Similarly for dusting, it seemed that there were optimum levels of light, wind and temperature, with much activity when these obtained, particularly when previous conditions had been less favourable in summer.

Displacement activities

Tentatively, a description of Blackbirds' bathing at dusk in winter is placed under this heading, since some features seem to preclude imitative behaviour. Most of this bathing at dusk was seen in the first winter, when a number of birds roosted near a favourite bathing place. Typically, when a new arrival approached the water, others would emerge and chase it to another spot, where more Blackbirds would appear and renew the aggression; generally, some of the aggressors as well as the arrival eventually bathed. In later winters, roosting birds were fewer, and bathing and chasing were less intense. Similar, but less persistent, pursuits were sometimes seen during the day, those involved often breaking off and eventually bathing.

A tendency to bathe at dusk in winter may not be uncommon; undoubtedly it was quite strong among Blackbirds. Whether it is always as pronounced as might be inferred from fig. 3, and how far it was increased by

the special circumstances associated with proximity to a roost, are not clear.

Discussion

Sunshine

For bathing, dusting and sunning, the influence of sunshine must be considered in relation to heat and to light generated: components which appeared to exert conflicting pressures at times. In cold weather, the warmth of the sun possibly helped to conserve the body heat of birds and to dry their feathers after bathing. At higher temperatures, however, it may have had a deterrent effect, with heat tolerances lower in bathing and dusting (preferred maxima perhaps about 21°C and 25°C, respectively) than in sunning (up to 30°C). In North Carolina, Potter & Hauser (1974) also noted that birds frequently failed to bathe on the hottest and driest days, even though water was available (table 4 suggests that such days are likely to have been much warmer than any normally encountered in the Park). Barlow *et al.* (1963) saw numerous birds sunning in a situation judged to be far hotter than the recorded air temperature of 35°C. Hauser (1957) found much sunning between 40°C and 60°C (recorded by a thermometer placed on the sunning site and therefore of recognised inaccuracy, but indicative of considerable heat): she concluded that the sun's rays, rather than heat alone, were the motivating factor. Mueller (1972), too, thought that visible light, not heat, elicited sunning.

Peculiar to midsummer and late summer was the curious fall in pre-noon distributions. For bathing, less activity before midday was shown by Wood-pigeons, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes (fig. 2). There was similar diminution in midsummer dusting (fig. 5), recorded also in late summer. It was repeated for all species sunning in midsummer (fig 6); the same pattern recurred for Starlings in late summer. There was no evidence that these events were due to any disturbance; rather, birds showed great boldness and persistence at such peak times and were not deterred by crowds of people. Lacking any other explanation, there remains a remote possibility that these happenings were related to local climate, that is to the onset of the heat hazing referred to above, which was sometimes quite noticeable in late morning in summer. The occurrence was not, however, sufficiently marked to show up in the hourly distributions of sunshine recorded monthly at the London Weather Centre.

Wind

Wind had a possible cooling function in warm weather, with both bathing and dusting, but apparently not with sunning, where moving air was nearly always avoided. Wind may also assist feather drying: Starlings presumed to have bathed were found with wet plumage and unable to fly in freezing, calm conditions (Frost 1971). The consistent seeking of airy bathing sites by passerines in the Park suggests that lack of breeze may have been as much a handicap as temperature, although, at an estimated -7°C (Frost *in litt.*), this was lower than any encountered during the study. The plumage of pigeons seems particularly well waterproofed, sometimes looking as

shiningly dry after a bathe as before; as feather drying is fairly easy for them, this could be one reason for their being the least prone, except in warm weather, to seek draughty sites for bathing.

Precipitation

The extensive literature on bathing in rain, snow and wet vegetation is of particular significance here. The first often occurs when rain comes suddenly, particularly after drought, or when weight of downpour increases. Sometimes, observations revealed that, although shelter might be available, it was not sought, or only partially used. In other instances, standing water was available, but ignored. Some birds bathe in rain by hanging upside down from branches: e.g. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* (Dorning 1954), and a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (Armstrong 1955). Some parrots (Psittacidae) bathe while hanging head-down (Buckley 1968, Smith 1975), but others while retaining an upright position in rain, with heads lowered, but wings and tails spread (Harrison 1961). White-tailed Kites *Elanus leucurus* perch in heavy rain with spread wings and tail (Watson 1940). Many pigeons (Columbidae) bathe in precipitation by leaning over to one side and raising the opposite wing, some species from the branches of trees, others from the ground: Galapagos Doves *Nesopelia galapagoensis*, protected from rain in an aviary, adopted the posture at the sight or sound of falling water (Nicolai 1962). In the Park, Woodpigeons and feral Rock Doves often rain-bathed on the ground. Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* did so from the ground or a perch.

More commonly, precipitation evokes bathing in standing water or snow, or bathing movements on the ground (e.g. Gerber 1967, Ruthke 1963). Both authors suggested that it was an incentive, especially, Ruthke noted, when rain came suddenly. This is supported by an observation from Majorca in May, when passage migrants, including Serins *Serinus serinus* and Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, immediately bathed in the puddles created by a sudden shower, while others performed bathing movements standing in the rain (R. Crane *in litt.*). Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* appear to bathe only in rain (Delius 1969). Bathing in snow by crows (Corvidae) has been recorded by Pfeiffer (1956), who suggested that a gentle fall would evoke the intention movements of bathing, although activity did not fully develop until there was some depth. Blue Jays *Cyanocitta cristata* bathe in sheets of snow, most frequently after recent falls (Weisbrod 1971), and a Stock Dove *Columba oenas* was found by Goodwin (1949) to bathe in snow, though unfrozen water was available. Records exist of birds flying through, or standing in, sprays from irrigation jets or other sprinklers (Frings & Frings 1959, Jaeger 1963, Scheithauer 1967), in the spray of a waterfall (Taylor 1954) or under a dripping tap (Michael 1933); and there are many observations of bathing in vegetation made wet by rain, dew or fog (e.g. Cornish 1951, Mitchell 1950, Staton 1950, Verbeek 1962).

That the freshness of water may be significant is indicated by the observations during drought in Ringwould; it was also noticeable in the Park that the thrushes occasionally used puddles beside the lake during rainfall, as did feral Rock Doves after overnight rain.

There is much evidence pointing to a geographically widespread readiness among many species to bathe in several forms of precipitation. Quick reactions to fresh water or moisture in any form will usually be necessary before rain ceases, puddles drain or surfaces dry. Small birds can easily use wet foliage or pools in slight depressions in the ground, but a special rain-bathing posture must be helpful to larger, or chiefly arboreal, species. Presumably, too, the habit of bathing in snow arises from the icy conditions with which it is usually associated.

Not everything described in the literature as bathing may, however, have been correctly categorised. Simmons (1964) suggested that much 'bathing' is really drying behaviour after birds have been accidentally wetted by rain, fog, and so on. Dow (1971), while agreeing that precipitation was a stimulus, thought that the performance of bathing movements by birds feeding on wet foliage was largely an incidental response, since often they continued to forage. In Ringwold, Blackbirds, Robins and Dunnocks often sought food among decaying leaves in the pond, occasionally performing a perfunctory bathing movement while so doing; at other times, apparently deliberate bathing was interrupted by brief pecks at the debris. Whatever the problems of interpretation in particular instances, essentially the outcome in such situations would seem to depend, as always, upon the mood of the individual bird; in this context, whichever periodic need—to bathe or to feed—happens to be the greater at the time.

Sunning and climate

In the Park, most sunning was seen during June and July, in settled weather, sunny and dry. In Florida and North Carolina, Potter & Hauser (1974) found most sunning in these months, but with many performances occurring after thunderstorms or other heavy rain: this was attributed to the effects of precipitation on moulting birds. Previously, Hauser (1957), noting that outbreaks of sunning occurred also after periods of overcast, questioned whether this might not be due to earlier deprivation of sunshine.

Climate could account for some of the differences in sunning behaviour between the USA and the UK. Table 4 shows that temperatures and rainfall are higher in Jacksonville, Florida, and Raleigh, North Carolina, than in London, and the weight of downpour heavier. There are also more thunderstorms: Potter & Hauser (1974) gave the annual average as 70-100 in Florida and 40-50 in central North Carolina, which contrasts with 10-15 in southeast England. What is perhaps most notable is that in Jacksonville and Raleigh sunshine prevails, whereas in London it never exceeds 43% of the available daylight (table 4).

Thus, sunning in the USA seems to have developed into something for which a periodic need was manifest, perhaps only seasonally. Arguably, the changes in behaviour in the Park and in Ringwold with settled weather in midsummer presaged the beginning of such habituation.

Interchangeability of activities

Since a tendency to perform and to preen when and where it was sunny was common to all three activities, it seems not impossible that either dusting or

sunning might, to some extent, represent a supplementary or alternative way of using sunshine—advantageous at seasons when conditions are likely to be unfavourable to bathing (e.g. drought or heat). The behaviour of Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonora* breeding on a Mediterranean island devoid of fresh water supports this supposition: they dusted and sunned regularly, but could bathe only in the rare rainfall (Ristow *et al.* 1980); in Morocco, they bathe in surface water (Smith 1965, Walter 1968).

Alternatively, if neither sunning (by some birds in some climates) nor dusting by House Sparrows becomes seasonally habitual, then it must be that both activities remain casual throughout the year, increasing during the long days of summer only because there is more time. Obviously, the last factor and, equally obviously, more sunshine or more dry earth are likely to be associated with more performances. The increased boldness and persistence of birds in summer, the diurnal patterns of incidence and the apparent correlation with weather changes all suggest, however, that either activity may assume temporary significance.

Interspecific differences

Apart from some similarities between the two pigeons and the two thrushes, the small group of birds studied in the Park showed little uniformity in the scope or detail of their maintenance programmes, their weather tolerances or other variables.

Blackbirds sunned frequently, seeming not much stimulated by sunlight when bathing, particularly in hot and hazy weather: for instance, numbers sunning in midsummer exceeded the numbers bathing, whereas ten times as many Starlings bathed as sunned (figs. 6 & 2). In midsummer they bathed most in the morning (57%, compared with 23% in midwinter). Little affected by low temperatures or rain, they bathed regularly at dusk in winter, as much on cold evenings as on mild ones. This suggests that Blackbirds tolerate cold well, but probably have rather low heat endurance when bathing. The last might bear on their readiness to sun.

Great sensitivity to sunshine was shown by House Sparrows when bathing or dusting; their sunning tended to be brief and casual and they seldom bathed in rain. The evolvment of dusting and its diurnal timing, early and late, may result from difficulties of bathing not only in dry conditions, but also of great heat if the bird originated in tropical Africa (Summers-Smith 1963). Simmons (1964), while holding that dusting cannot serve precisely the same purpose as true bathing, suggested that selection pressures and irregular or seasonable rain may have been responsible for its development as an alternative in some species. To practise both bathing and dusting would seem to add flexibility to a maintenance programme: House Sparrows are, so far as accounts show, outstanding in the regularity with which they use both methods.

Different again were the performances of the feral Rock Doves. Whether their sunning and basking was seasonal is doubtful. Sunning may always be habitual in the case of Galapagos Doves: Nicolai (1962) found that they regularly adopted sunning postures around noon in winter, whether the sun shone or not, particularly after long periods without sunshine.

Specific heat tolerances may have been important internal variables. Whether or not any other physiological factor sometimes affected an activity is uncertain; if so, this too seemed to differ interspecifically. For instance, Woodpigeons bathed with great persistence in spring, the beginning of their breeding season (Cramp 1972); so too did feral Rock Doves in late summer, at the peak of their body moult (Levi 1957).

Epilogue

Much of what is written here is, admittedly, based on subjective assessments of weather values. Moreover, some comments on bathing behaviour in various weather conditions have tended to be coloured by the performances of the most numerous species, the House Sparrows and feral Rock Doves. Despite these and other limitations, this paper is presented in the hope that it may help to focus attention on the circumstances attending maintenance activities, about which all too little is known.

Acknowledgments

Derek Goodwin and the late Dr R. K. Murton gave help and encouragement at the beginning of the study. Special thanks are due to Dr R. J. Kennedy for his constructive comments and patience in going through several drafts of this paper, and to Dr K. E. L. Simmons for many comments on my penultimate draft. I am also grateful to others, too numerous to name, who have also advised. I am also obliged to the Meteorological Office for the details given in table 4 and other weather data.

Summary

A study of bathing, dusting and sunning among feral Rock Doves *Columba livia*, Woodpigeons *C. palumbus*, House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and Song Thrushes *T. philomelos* was carried out during 1967-74 in a London park, and later at Ringwould, Kent. For these six species, bathing was habitual, continuing throughout the year. Great outbursts of activity were seen in winter, tending to occur after prolonged rainfall perhaps when it was still cold and overcast, conditions not generally conducive to bathing. Thus, tolerance of adverse weather seems to vary with the degree of periodic need to bathe. Increased activity followed the onset of sunshine after periods of overcast, reverting to normal when sunny weather persisted: this suggests a further need, for regular bathing and preening in sunlight. Bathing sometimes diminished in hot and dry weather, conditions likely to lead to scarce, perhaps noxious, water supplies and increased predator pressure. Bathing in sudden rain showers or wet foliage may have developed as one alternative in such circumstances. So, too, bathing in snow may have arisen where icy conditions prevail.

Dusting by House Sparrows was most frequent in summer; sunlight appeared to be an incentive at all seasons. Much dusting occurred after bathing; both activities also took place independently. The dusting not obviously linked with bathing occurred chiefly in summer and at the beginning and end of the day. It appeared to be casual in winter, but sometimes habitual in summer.

Sunning was studied only in the case of Starlings, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes. For these species, it was seasonal, and occurred most, and at highest intensity, in the 12 midsummer weeks, virtually ceasing in the corresponding midwinter period. In summer, it increased in sunny dry weather: occasionally, in these circumstances, there seemed to be evidence of sensitivity to gains and losses of light. These results differ from those of Potter & Hauser (1974), who found that, in Florida and North Carolina, most sunning occurred after summer thunderstorms and periods of overcast. It is suggested that these discrepancies may arise from climatic differences: due to the greater amount of sunshine, and perhaps the higher temperatures, sunning becomes habitual in summer in some parts of the USA; perhaps only occasionally so in southeast England.

Performing and preening, when and where it is sunny, is a common feature of all three activities. For many species, heat endurance may be higher in sunning than in bathing or

dusting. So, if conditions of heat and drought are inimical to bathing, the development of sunning—inasmuch as it may represent a supplementary or alternative way of using sunshine—could be advantageous for some birds (e.g. Starlings, Blackbirds); with House Sparrows, it is chiefly dusting which increases and apparently supplements bathing. No marked change in behaviour was evident in the case of feral Rock Doves.

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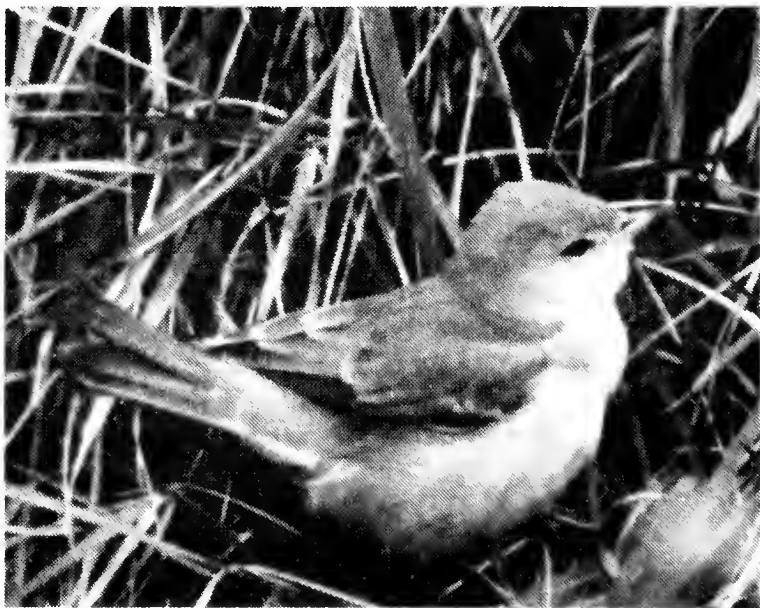
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Mystery photographs

62 The grass provides scale, and last month's mystery bird is clearly a largish warbler. The first step in narrowing the identification further should be to determine the genus. The bill is not particularly long nor obviously wide-based, so thoughts of *Acrocephalus* or *Hippolais* can be dismissed; it is, however, quite stout, which makes



Sylvia a possibility. Tail-shape is also important in identification of warbler genera; the splayed tail feathers do not help, but it looks square-ended and is clearly not rounded or graduated, which eliminates all thoughts of a big *Acrocephalus* or *Locustella*, and reinforces the *Sylvia* idea. Looking again at the bill: the culmen is curved, so we do have a bulky *Sylvia*.

The peaked crown, rather untidy look and paler edging to the wing feathers might suggest Whitethroat *S. communis*, but, although it is fore-shortened in the photograph, is the tail proportionally long enough for that species? Looking closer, there is an absence of the striking, extensive white

or whitish on the outer tail feathers which Whitethroat would exhibit, although there is a whitish outer web to the one visible outer feather. The wing, too, is wrong for Whitethroat. As well as pale tips and edges to the tertials, there are pale tips to the median coverts and pale tips and edges to the greater coverts, giving two wing-bars, the lower, larger one looking rather messy. This 'scruffy' wing pattern is diagnostic of one species, Barred Warbler *S. nisoria*, and all the other features immediately also slot into place. Is there, perhaps, even a trace of barring on the lower belly, or is that imagination and only dark bases to ruffled feathers? Probably the latter, for the dark (rather than yellowish) iris and the broad (rather than narrow) pale edges to the tertials show that it is in its first winter, when barring is usually confined to the undertail-coverts.

On autumn passage, this big, clumsy warbler is usually to be seen stumbling around in bushes, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* or ivy *Hedera helix*, feeding on berries as well as insects, but this one had to make do with long grass on bleak Fair Isle, Shetland, where it was photographed in September 1980 by Brian R. Field.

J. T. R. SHARROCK



32. Mystery photograph 63. Identify the species. Answer next month

Fifty years ago . . .

'BLUE TITS TEARING PAPER. I have recently come across a considerable number of examples of a habit of the Blue Tit (*Parus c. obscurus*) which is new to me. All the cases have occurred in and around the Lake District, and the habit seems to be prevalent over a very wide area. In a number of instances the birds have entered rooms in houses through open windows, and have stripped the wallpaper from the walls around each picture nail and along the lintels of the doors; . . . In every case mentioned it has been definitely proved that Blue Tits were the culprits, though in two cases the evidence is only circumstantial. It would be of interest to know the reason for this curious habit, and whether it has been noticed elsewhere.' A. ASTLEY, (*Brit. Birds* 25: 271, February 1932)

Notes



Turnstone feeding on gull excrement On 2nd March 1979, at Mousehole, Cornwall, I observed a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* feeding on the soft greenish-white excrement of a gull *Larus* on a concrete path. By probing at it, and by turning its head sideways, the wader was able to pull away most of the material. Turnstones are well known as opportunist feeders, but I had not found them previously taking gull droppings. BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Unusual upperwing pattern of Little Gull On 25th May 1981, at Cley, Norfolk, I noticed a Little Gull *Larus minutus* with an unusual upperwing pattern. Basically, the whole of the upperwing surface was dark brown, with a black 'W' and subterminal secondary bar showing in good light, and a white trailing edge to all but the outer primaries. The rest of the plumage was the same as three other first-summer Little Gulls present (broken dark tail band, grey mantle, same head pattern and so on). This is presumably the plumage briefly mentioned by P. J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 74: 115) as a 'very rare variant'.

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PJG comments that he has heard of only two other Little Gulls exhibiting this plumage pattern. EDS

Second-winter Common Gull with prominent tail band On 14th March 1981, at Cleethorpes, South Humberside, I noticed a gull which resembled a typical second-winter Common Gull *Larus canus* except for prominent traces of a black tail band (fig. 1). Never having seen a Common Gull of this age with any sign of a tail band, but having seen several photographs of second-winter Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* showing this feature, I studied it closely. I consulted the literature for the source of my mistaken belief that second-winter Common Gulls never show a tail band. I found that P. J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 66: 115-118, repeated in *Frontiers of Bird Identification*, 1980) stated of second-winter Ring-billed Gulls 'over half . . . retained prominent traces of a dark bar on the secondaries and a subterminal tail band. These marks are diagnostic, for Common Gulls hardly ever retain traces of immaturity on the inner wings and tail in sufficient strength to be visible in the field', and W. R. Hirst (1979, *Birds of Cornwall*) stated, when describing the broken tail band of a second-winter Ring-billed Gull, 'this feature is apparently never shown by similar aged Common Gulls and is diagnostic of Ring-billed Gulls of this age'. In a later paper, however, P. J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 72: 142-182) noted for second-year Common Gull 'individuals showing prominent traces of a secondary bar or tail band are rare'. Obviously, this feature is not diagnostic of second-winter Ring-billed Gull and should be used with caution when this species is suspected.

GRAHAM P. CATLEY

13 West Acridge, Barrow-on-Humber, South Humberside



Fig. 1 Second-winter Common Gull *Larus canus*, South Humberside, March 1981
(Graham P. Catley)

PJG estimates that probably less than one in 300 second-year Common Gulls show obvious subterminal black tail markings, whereas they are shown by probably the majority of second-year Ring-billed Gulls. An exceptionally 'retarded' tail-banded second-winter Common Gull which he observed in Scilly in October 1977 also showed several brown coverts on the inner wing, forming a partial carpal-bar, and lacked the usual mirrors on the outer two primaries. EDS

Apparent bigamy by Black Redstart On 8th June 1978, at an industrial site in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, where one pair of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* had nested in 1976 and 1977, we were shown two nests and subsequently located a third. Nest 1 held two cracked eggs and had obviously been deserted a number of days earlier. The two others, 100-150m away, were 34½ m apart: nest 2 held a female incubating five eggs, and nest 3 was apparently complete and fully lined, but empty. On 15th June, nest 2 contained four chicks, and nest 3 a female incubating five eggs (one addled). The four young in nest 2 were fed by both a male in excellent breeding plumage and a female. By 28th June, both nests held young: those in nest 2 were almost fledged, and nest 3 contained three newly hatched young and two eggs. By 3rd July, the young had left nest 2, and both the female and what was presumably the male from nest 2 were feeding four young in nest 3. Although an immature male was seen at the site in early May, it moved off before 8th June and only a single male was ever seen subsequently. Since there was only a slight overlap in the periods when young were present simultaneously in nests 2 and 3, it would seem that this apparently bigamous male spent most of his time visiting nest 2 and did not turn his attentions to nest 3 until the young in the former had left. This same male was seen to visit both nests on at least two occasions by G. P. Mawson, who ringed all eight young. It seems possible that nest 1 may have been deserted by the female, who eventually occupied nest 3 and whose young were thus only one or two days old when those in nest 2 fledged. We can find no mention of bigamy in the literature for the Black Redstart.

although it has been recorded for the Redstart *P. phoenicurus* (*Brit. Birds* 68: 77).

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Feeding association between mole and juvenile Song Thrush At 05.15 GMT on 27th August 1978, at Stodmarsh, Kent, we noticed an erratic movement among leaf litter on the banks of a small dyke. After watching for some minutes and noting the proximity of a juvenile Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, we observed the area closely. After a short time, the movement among the litter was repeated, and we realised that it was caused by a mole *Talpa europaea*. The thrush was feeding among the leafy litter about half a metre from the disturbance and, as the mole's burrowing broke up the soil, the thrush caught two or three earthworms (Lumbricidae). The mole then surfaced and pushed around among the litter, working along the banks of the dyke at a considerable speed; it was followed at half a metre by the thrush, who once again found invertebrate food among the disturbed litter. After a brief interval, the mole disappeared underground and the thrush dug in the disturbed soil, although it was not seen to catch anything. The mole then reappeared about 6m away, and the thrush immediately ran to its new position and began to forage around the disturbance. After five or six minutes, the mole scuttled off through the surface litter, closely followed by the thrush, and was lost from sight at about 20m.

N. V. MCCANCH and MONICA MCCANCH
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Feeding association between mole and birds I am prompted by the note concerning a mole *Talpa europaea* and a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* observed by Mr & Mrs N. V. McCanch (see above) to record a similar observation involving a mole, two Blackbirds *T. merula* and a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. On two dates in September 1980, a mole which was raising lines of disturbed soil across my lawn at Blunham, Bedfordshire, in the course of constructing shallow tunnels, was followed by two Blackbirds, which clearly fed very successfully on worms or other invertebrates unearched by the mole's activities. When the mole moved on, the Blackbirds paid no further attention to the lines of loose soil, feeding in the usual manner (rather than avidly, as they had before) elsewhere on the lawn. On the second occasion, a Robin was the first bird to discover the mole, but had devoured only one or two worms before being displaced by two Blackbirds. The mole never surfaced. I surmised that thrushes and chats probably often take advantage of the activities of moles.

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Spotted Flycatcher catching and eating large butterflies On 30th August 1978, at Sandy, Bedfordshire, I closely observed the feeding activities of a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. A flowering *Buddleia* bush, growing against a south-facing wall opposite my vantage point, had attracted a large number of peacock *Inachis io*, small tortoiseshell *Aglais*

urticae and 'white' *Pieris* butterflies. The flycatcher was hunting from several prominent perches immediately above and to the side of the bush. In 20 minutes, I observed 11 feeding sorties directed against large butterflies, almost certainly peacocks; no attempt was made to catch whites. On two occasions, the flycatcher caught a peacock in flight and returned to a perch, against which it repeatedly struck the prey before eating it. Once, it managed to dispose of the butterfly's wings easily, but on the second occasion it experienced difficulty in removing them and eventually ate the insect with parts of the fore- and hindwings still attached. *The Handbook* mentions whites and the meadow brown *Maniola jurtina* in the diet of Spotted Flycatchers, but I can find no record of this species catching such large and powerful butterflies as peacocks.

STUART D. HOUSDEN

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Choughs attracted to burnt areas for food Short turf and heavily grazed areas are important as a source of food for Choughs *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, with their specialised methods of feeding on ants and their larvae and other insect prey (Cowdy 1973; Holyoak 1967, 1972). At Maughold Head, Isle of Man, an extensive area of rank coastal heathland (predominantly heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and gorse *Ulex*, with large tracts of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*) was burnt off on 25th February 1976. The following morning, a flock of ten Choughs, possibly most of the local population, was feeding over some of the burnt ground. They probed among the ashes and burnt heather stubble in typical fashion, but some were observed picking up and apparently eating dead scorched caterpillars; of many examined, the less scorched individuals were mainly larvae of swift moths *Hepialus*. The weather at the time was mild and settled; there had been no recent harsh conditions which might have forced the Choughs to seek alternative food sources.

At another locality on the Calf of Man, two areas of similar coastal heathland (but without gorse), unmanaged for many years, were burnt off in the autumn of 1972 and the winter of 1972/73, respectively. The latter area, approximately 4ha, became a regular feeding site for Choughs from 1973 onwards. A pair nested nearby and frequently fed among the burnt heather during the breeding season and, with their offspring and other family parties, during the summer months in 1973 and in subsequent years. By 1977, much of the area had greened over substantially, with new heather growth of 10-15cm in many places. Sheep *Ovis* and rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* grazed over the area, but their effect on the vegetation was not great. Choughs continued to feed there, but less regularly and in smaller numbers than in the years just after the fire. The other site, of similar size, was more extensively damaged by fire; much of the area was still completely denuded of vegetation five years later and, in places, the shallow soil had been badly eroded. Bare, burnt peat and dead heather still probably accounted for as much as 70% of the surface area, although colonising mosses and other plants, as well as young heather, were beginning to bind the soil together; bracken was also spreading in the deeper soils. Grazing by sheep and rabbits probably slowed down the recolonisation process, but

added humus to the soil. By 1975, Choughs were showing increasing interest in the site. In 1976, flocks of over 20 regularly fed on the burnt patch between mid June and mid July, and to a lesser extent in the spring and early autumn; they probed round the deeper areas of cracked peat and among loose stones and weathering slate outcrops on the surface; on 19th June, a flock of 36 (the largest recorded on the Calf of Man for 16 years), including parties from the Manx mainland, fed busily on the area. In 1977, large numbers were attracted during the summer months; they also fed in other open areas of heavily grazed turf, but the open, bare, burnt ground was apparently their preferred feeding site. Ants and their larvae, extremely numerous among the stony ground and in the deep soil, appeared the main prey taken; other insects, such as beetle larvae, also appeared to be eaten.

Similar observations have been made at the RSPB reserve at South Stack cliffs, Anglesey, with nearly 300ha of uniform coastal heath (mixed heather and gorse on acidic peaty soils). In November 1978, 4ha were burnt off, and for the subsequent two weeks a flock of over 20 Choughs fed there regularly, on some days continuously from sunrise to sunset; they had not been attracted noticeably to this area before the fire. Although their interest later waned, they continued to return there throughout the winter.

On Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd, in January 1979, examination of an area of upland on Yr Eifl showed numerous fresh Chough faeces in an extensive patch of burnt heather within a few days of burning.

These observations illustrate how readily Choughs are attracted to burnt areas, where they seem able to find and exploit a ready source of insect food. Such areas provide useful short-term feeding sites, and burning may in the long term be a useful management tool where traditional farming practices have ceased or where there is an absence of grazing in otherwise suitable Chough habitat.

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First-autumn Reed Bunting in song Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* regularly frequent, and occasionally breed in, rough grassland near my home in the outer London suburbs. At about 06.00 GMT on 20th July 1978, I heard a Reed Bunting there in full song and was surprised to discover that it was an immature in fresh, buffish plumage, with no trace of black on either head or throat. It gave a typical, full volume version of the species' song a dozen or so times from different prominent perches on oak saplings, over a period of ten to 15 minutes. It had probably been in the area for a day or so previously, as I had glimpses of a female or immature at the same spot on 18th July; what was presumably the same individual was singing again at the same site on 28th. I can find no reference to any species of bunting singing in its first autumn, although there is a record of male Reed

Buntings, presumably adults, singing in late September (*Brit. Birds* 60: 139).

R. J. CHANDLER

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Dr C. K. Catchpole has commented as follows: 'It is unusual for male passerines to sing a fully developed song in their first autumn, and also to appear to defend a territory by regular singing from a fixed site over several days. Reed Buntings are very difficult to age or sex at a distance at this time of year, as they may well be moulting. It is possible that the bunting in this instance was an older male during or after moult, as adult Reed Buntings certainly sing and remain in territory at this time of year.' Eds

[We wish to thank two subscribers, who wish to remain anonymous, for their generous donation which has enabled us to include an extra page of 'Notes' in this issue. Eds]

Letters

White-tailed Black Storks We were very interested in the note on apparently aberrantly coloured Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* in Yugoslavia and Greece (*Brit. Birds* 73: 104), as we saw similar birds in Malawi during 1976. On several occasions between May and October, at a breeding site in the Dedza Highlands, we saw Black Storks which appeared to have a considerable amount of white on the uppertail. More than once, there were up to four storks flying near the site, although only one nest was in use, and we noticed that two sometimes showed apparently white tails. Thinking that this might help to identify the breeding pair, we always kept a watch for storks with 'white' tails. We noted, however, that birds arriving at the nest sometimes had black tails and on other occasions seemed to have white ones. Either more than two storks were feeding the young, or the two involved were changing the appearance of their tails. Subsequently, on a quite windy day, as the storks flew low over us, we observed that the very long white undertail-coverts were billowing out sideways; when the birds turned on their approach to the nest, they appeared to have a large amount of white on the uppertail. At sufficiently close range, we saw quite clearly that the white feathers were very much finer than the tail feathers, almost wispy in appearance. Checking back over our notes, we could not identify any single common factor, such as strong winds, that might account for the regular appearance of a seemingly white tail; it remains a mystery to us why, at times, one or both of the parents should display this feature, whereas at other times neither did.

J. H. RYDER and B. A. RYDER

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I hesitate to suggest it, but could it have been faeces-staining (so common on storks)? It does appear that the original observers (*Brit. Birds* 73: 104) saw only the undersides as the birds were soaring.

W. G. HARVEY

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Identification of sand plovers J. C. Sinclair and G. N. Nicholls, in their paper on the winter identification of Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 206-213), made certain generalisations, based mainly on data from southern Africa, which are not always borne out by observations from coastal Kenya, where both species are found in numbers throughout the year. Identification criteria overlap to such an extent that, in the field, some individuals (especially large male Lesser and small female Greater) can at best be identified only as probably one or probably the other species, even with good views. Despite this overlap, combinations of specific characters do give each species a distinctive 'jizz', which allows positive identification of a majority of individuals. In Sinclair & Nicholls, the sketches in fig. 1 do not capture this well, although a comparison of plates 124 and 125 with plates 123 and 127 does demonstrate it. The value of photographs for comparing plumage tones of such similar species is, however, severely limited by the variations in exposures used.

The accidental mislabelling of plates 121 and 126 has already been noted (*Brit. Birds* 73: 586); I had concluded this, based on my experience of the two species, and my views were endorsed by H. A. Britton, W. G. Harvey, D. J. Pearson and D. A. Turner, all of whom have considerable experience of both species in East Africa and elsewhere. In both plates, Greater not Lesser Sand Plover is portrayed.

My experience with 83 Greaters and 86 Lessers handled for ringing at Mida Creek, near Malindi, since 1978 does not support the view that 'complete overlap between the two species' renders leg-colour 'of no help in distinguishing the species'. In the hand, the legs of Lesser are consistently dark grey, while those of Greater are invariably paler, although I agree that this feature is usually of value in the field only in combination with other features, notably bill-size and tarsus-length.

In southern Africa, Lessers apparently moult to nuptial body plumage earlier than do Greaters; in coastal Kenya, on the other hand, Greaters moult substantially earlier than Lessers. The different wintering populations (of both species) involved may originate from different breeding areas, but one would expect southern-wintering, early-moulting Lessers to occur on passage on the east coast of Africa. There are, however, very few Kenyan records of Lessers in full nuptial plumage; by contrast, a large proportion of Greaters assumes nuptial plumage by late February to early May. Many individuals of both species lacking signs of nuptial plumage by April-May are oversummering first-years. Known adults (with fresh primaries) handled for ringing provide instructive figures: all 21 Greaters in early April had substantial signs of cinnamon on the breast; whereas, of 13 Lessers handled on 1st May, one very fat bird was almost fully moulted, three had incomplete cinnamon bands, and the others had no cinnamon at all or a mere trace.

The following summary of identification features, prepared by W. G. Harvey, lists differences in the field (in non-breeding plumage) of Greater Sand Plover compared with Lesser Sand Plover, in approximate order of reliability:

1. Bill longer, heavier and more bulbous; appears disproportionate in males.
2. Legs longer, often held bowed, usually paler greyish-green.
3. Bulk larger, particularly head; crown often looks flatter.
4. Eye usually looks large.
5. Upperparts often paler, sandier grey-brown.
6. More white usually apparent on forehead and supercilium.
7. More white often apparent in tail.
8. Usually feeds in more scattered flocks (cf. Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*).

In essence, Greater is a rangier, paler bird with several apparently disproportionate or exaggerated features. It also has a softer, more trilling call, but the value of this difference depends on the individual observer's aural facilities and experience of both species.

P. L. BRITTON

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Kitson *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 568-573) listed six criteria for the identification of Greater Sand Plover. I have studied both Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers at length in Kenya and Thailand and feel that most of these criteria are, at best, unreliable.

1. SIZE It is often impossible to judge accurately the size of a lone individual. Sinclair & Nicholls (*Brit. Birds* 73: 206-213) stated that Lesser is 'bigger and longer legged than Ringed Plover [*C. hiaticula*]', while Kitson *et al.* considered it barely larger. I feel that care must be taken to ensure that the Ringed Plover being compared is not a particularly small or large one: a Lesser Sand Plover could easily look 25% bigger than a small Ringed.
2. TARSUS Observed tarsus-length in the field must be open to criticism. Female Dunlins *Calidris alpina* are larger than average males (Prater *et al.* 1977, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders*); had the actual tarsus-length been 10% less than that estimated by Kitson *et al.* (estimated as $1.5 \times$ Dunlin; actually is $1.35 \times$), then comparison with average male and female Dunlins would give tarsus measurements of 32.4 mm and 33.75 mm respectively, both of which fit the range of Lesser Sand Plover and not Greater (see Prater *et al.*). Even an error of 5% would put the tarsus-length in the range 33.5-36.3 mm (mean 34.9 mm), depending on the Dunlin involved; this range overlaps with both larger Lessers and smaller Greaters.
3. BILL To my mind, the size and structure of the bill is the only foolproof way of separating lone sand plovers, Greater having a large, heavy bill giving it a distinctly mean look. For me, the identification of the Pagham individual rested on this feature, which I feel is both necessary and sufficient for sand plover separation.
4. EAR-COVERTS I have found individuals of both species sufficiently variable in tone of ear-coverts to render this feature unreliable.
5. TAIL Although both Kitson *et al.* and Sinclair & Nicholls did not note any interspecific differences in wing and tail patterns, they used the latter as an identification criterion. I feel that any such differences are, as yet, unproven.
6. CALL Kitson *et al.* likened the call of Greater Sand Plover to that of a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and stated that 'the call we heard from the Pagham bird was the call we have learned to associate with Greater Sand Plover'. Confusingly, Sinclair & Nicholls likened the call of Lesser Sand Plover also to that of a Turnstone. Like Kitson *et al.*, I have not heard lone Lessers call, and calls from mixed flocks have sounded to me . . . well, like a Turnstone.

In summarising, Sinclair & Nicholls stated 'Greater is larger and taller than Lesser, but the most important distinction is in bill size and shape.' I feel that, while some of the other features may be useful pointers, the bill is at present the only reliable way of separating lone non-breeding Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers.

It will be interesting to note the occurrence of Britain's first Lesser Sand Plover, a species more easily confusable on a poor view with Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, although its lack of a white collar is a good starting point in their separation.

RICHARD J. FAIRBANK

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Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers I read with interest the identification paper on these two species (*Brit. Birds* 73: 206-213). I see the difference between them as lying in their character. The Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* is quite a pleasing little bird. The Greater *C. leschenaultii* strikes me as an ugly brute, with a body too small for its legs, a head too large for its body and a bill too large for its head. Perhaps, like the camel, the Greater Sand Plover was designed by a committee?

M. J. ROGERS

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We do not wish to encourage identification solely by subjective assessments of jizz, but we do enjoy and support M. J. Rogers's succinct summary. EDS

Possible regional variation in Olive-backed Pipit calls With reference to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock's note on the calls of certain pipits *Anthus* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 233), I think it possible that the controversy may be caused to some extent by the regional variation of calls: at least in the case of the Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni*, which I have heard on Fair Isle, Shetland, in central India and in Thailand. On Fair Isle, I noted the call as 'tzeep': very similar to that of Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*, but perhaps a shade less flat and dull. The calls in India I described in exactly the same way, noting that one heard overhead would hardly sound different from a Tree Pipit; I also noted a soft, weak 'tsip'. These notes would support the claim that Olive-backed is very hard to separate from Tree Pipit. In Thailand, however, I noted that the Olive-backed calls were 'clearly more distinctive than Indian birds: a short explosive "dzeep", rather more reminiscent of Red-throated *A. cervinus* and definitely separable from *trivialis*'. This last note tallies closely with JTRS's description. I think the calls do vary, probably across the range (and it should follow that the Fair Isle individual was not from Thailand).

There may not be enough awareness of the fact that, just as the plumage of many species differs across their range, so may their calls. One has only to note the call and song of Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* of the race *tristis*, which are totally different from those of the nominate race. More contentiously, I also suggest that Indian Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola* call slightly differently from those in Thailand, and may overlap with some of the variations in calls of the various races of Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*. As we are never too sure of the origins of British vagrants, this should all be taken into account.

W. E. ODDIE

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Announcements

Cheaper holidays with ‘Sunbird’ Any *BB* subscriber who takes a birdwatching holiday with SUNBIRD HOLIDAYS can now claim a 5% reduction. As well as giving *BB* subscribers cheaper holidays, this new special arrangement will also benefit *BB* financially. You will, therefore, be helping *BB* if you take a SUNBIRD HOLIDAY. The 5% reduction comes into effect with all holidays departing on or after 1st March 1982: you can claim your refund now, even if you have already paid.



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Bill Oddie’s Little Black Bird Book This title is no longer obtainable through ‘British BirdShop’, but we are informed by the publishers, Eyre Methuen Ltd, that a paperback version (price £1.50) will be available in book shops in early spring.

Richard Richardson memorial funds We have been sent details of the expenditure from the funds collected in memory of the late Richard Richardson, the Norfolk artist and naturalist whose kindly help and friendship, especially to young birdwatchers and bird artists, were such a feature of any visit to Cley and its East Bank (see Obituary, *Brit. Birds* 70: 542-543).

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON APPEAL FUND	
Donation to ‘The Richard Richardson Award Fund’	£1,100.00
Scrape at edge of Cley Marsh	363.84
Hide at Cley Marsh	318.08
Donation to Norfolk Naturalists’ Trust for maintenance of hide in perpetuity	100.00
Gravestone	225.90
Donation to Richard Richardson reference library at Fair Isle Bird Observatory	50.00
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	£2,157.82
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THE RICHARD RICHARDSON MEMORIAL FUND	
Donation to ‘The Richard Richardson Award Fund’	300.00
Donation to Fair Isle ‘John Harrison Memorial Fund’	214.70
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	£514.70
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Contributors to the funds will note that Richard’s interests in Cley and

Fair Isle are both represented, as well as his desire to assist young bird-watchers (the 'John Harrison Memorial Fund' subsidises visits by young birdwatchers to Fair Isle Bird Observatory) and young bird artists ('The Richard Richardson Award' is presented annually to a bird artist aged under 21 who enters for the *British Birds* 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition, see *Brit. Birds* 74: 275-278 for the latest winners).

J. C. Harrison's 'The Birds of Prey of the British Isles' The normal price of this limited-edition book with 20 specially commissioned water-colour mounted plates is £450. David Evans, the author and publisher, has generously offered to donate one of the 275 signed copies to raise funds for *British Birds*. This copy, as bound in choice half morocco, is now for sale to *BB* readers. The highest offer over £250 received by 31st March 1982 will be accepted and the proceeds will be devoted wholly to *British Birds*. This is an outstanding opportunity to acquire a high-value book, and, at the same time, to help *BB*. Offers (no money at this stage) should be sent to J. C. Harrison Book Offer, *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Requests

Breeding wader surveys In spring 1982, surveys of breeding waders are being planned for the whole of England, Scotland and Wales. The BTO, the RSPB, the SOC, the Wader Study Group and the NCC are co-operating to promote two surveys. In England and Wales, the survey of Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows will look primarily at damp lowland grasslands. The parallel survey of Breeding Waders of Scottish Agricultural Land will look at the wader populations of the straths and glens. The target species for both surveys are Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*; Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*; Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*; Curlew *Numenius arquata*; and Redshank *Tringa totanus* although observers will be encouraged to record other wetland species as well.

Drainage, agricultural intensification and afforestation schemes present an increasing threat to the remaining important wader breeding areas. To allow conservationists to comment effectively and to oppose detrimental schemes, it is vital to obtain maximum coverage. If you can help with these very important surveys, contact Dr Ken Smith, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR, for England and Wales, or Hector Galbraith, 96 Neilston Road, Paisley PA2 6EL, for Scotland.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Sandgrouse 3 The Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME), true to its promise, has just published *Sandgrouse* No. 3. The publication of three issues inside 12 months is a considerable achievement: the journal now moves on to an annual (autumn) publication date, with features in forthcoming issues including an up-date on records for Turkey from 1976 to 1980 and a checklist of the birds of Afghanistan. No. 3

contains much of interest, including a definitive paper on raptor migration in southern Israel and Sinai, two contributions on Egypt, and an important note on the field identification of Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunnii*. Copies (£5 each) are available from OSME, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

BTO at Swanwick This winter's annual BTO conference, held, as usual, at Swanwick in Derbyshire, during the weekend of 4th-6th December, was another success, thanks to good company, good talks and impeccable organisation (Gwen Bonham and team are very experienced by now). Much of what I do not mention was good, but highlights are personal and my own preferences were for Dr Nick Davies's illuminating 'Feeding behaviour of wagtails and llycatchers' (in September 1979, he promised *BB* a paper on his Pied Wagtail work, and we await it eagerly), Dr Jim Fowler's entertaining account of the serious work being undertaken in Shetland to assess the impact of the oil industry on the islands' fauna and flora, and Richard Porter's summary of current knowledge of raptor migration in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (go to Elat to see the most, but go farther east—to eastern Turkey and, when possible, Iran—or to Saudi Arabia and the Yemen, or to Suez to make new discoveries). Richard T. Mills managed to start the conference off at a cracking pace with a one-hour, 200-slide tour of southern Ireland; James Ferguson-Lees tried to drum up support for the Winter Atlas, only to find that nearly everyone in his audience was already engaged in this exciting survey/census; and Professor W. G. Hale presented the 13th Witherby Memorial Lecture, on the biology of the Redshank.

During the annual dinner, those present in the always-informal annexe dining-room witnessed the presentation to Cecil Plant of an outrageously large, inscribed, mirror—the 'Tuckered Medal' (an affectionate reflection of the Tucker Medal)—in recognition of his ten years as the BTO's Administrator.

The traditional *British Birds* mystery photograph competition attracted 170 entries, but only one that was all-correct. A flying Capercaillie (which appeared in *Brit. Birds* 56: plate 5) got identified also as White-tailed Eagle, Pygmy Cormorant and Black Woodpecker, but the real test proved to be a Nick Dymond photograph of a Red-necked Phalarope, which was correctly identified

only by the competition winner, David Bates, who was presented with his champagne prize by Lorna Sharrock. Records were broken with the sale of paintings from the exhibition organised by Robert Gillmor and with the sale of raffle tickets by the enthusiastic Christopher Mumms, both benefiting BTO funds. (*JTRS*)

Cagebird Show The 38th National Exhibition of Cage and Aviary Birds was held at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, during 4th-6th December 1981. It seemed as if the variety of birds on show was rather less than usual, perhaps reflecting the recent ban on imports (for health reasons) and, so far as British species are concerned, changes under the new Wildlife and Countryside Act. Four Siberian Thrushes *Zonthera sibirica* were interesting, as was the fact that they have been bred in captivity—where, it is said, they build a nest like a Blackbird's, lay eggs like those of a Mistle Thrush and sing like Redwings!

Len Hill We were sorry to hear of the recent death of Len Hill, whose 'Birdland' at Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, is justifiably regarded as a shining example to all those who like keeping birds in captivity. His ownership of two Falkland Islands, with large and important penguin and albatross colonies, showed that his interests embraced the conservation of wild birds as well as bird-keeping.

It's all at the Porthcressa For the sociably-minded among Scillies aficionados, an extra attraction throughout last October was the availability, especially for birders, of the 'cellar' at the new Porthcressa Restaurant on St Mary's. With evening meals at 95p, a fully equipped bar and slide projection facilities, it quickly became the essential venue for up to 200 birders. After each evening's log-call (BBRC secretary Mike Rogers presiding) there was a variety of entertainments, including slide-illustrated talks, discussion sessions, quizzes and even a Birdwatchers' Ball ('come dressed as your favourite bird!'). Winner of the 'Birdbrain of Scilly' contest (styled after TV's *Mastermind*) was Suffolk recorder Derek Moore (33 points, one pass) who just pipped Ray O'Reilly (33 points, five passes). 'Name the Bird' quiz winner was Graham Evans of Walsall, whose correct entry was one of 26 out of 90 submitted (answers were Bewick's Swan, American Robin, Slender-billed Gull, Pectoral Sandpiper, Imperial Eagle, Greenish Warbler), and 'Identify the Skull' winner was Simon

Aspinall, with six out of eight correct. Thanks are due to David Hunt for organising this highly popular (and hopefully, annual) facility. (P/JG)

Welcome signs on Scilly Improving bird-watcher/islander relations on Scilly are exemplified by two signs which appeared at the height of the 'invasion' last October. The first marked a new half-mile birdwatching trail opened by farmer John Banfield through his previously private fields, and stated: 'BIRDWATCHERS. Please follow yellow markers. If ANY damage is done to any crops or hedges, this trail will be closed to you. The choice is yours.' The second invited bird-watchers into a private garden to get views of a resident Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*. The increasingly cheerful atmosphere is largely the result of exemplary behaviour by birdwatchers in recent years, especially in fastidiously keeping to public roads and footpaths and making special viewing arrangements with the landowner when a rare bird has occurred on private land. Also, working parties of birdwatchers have voluntarily undertaken such tasks as footpath clearance and dry-stone wall repairs. While it cannot be claimed that the 1981 Scilly season was entirely free of examples of selfish or irresponsible behaviour by a few of the 1,000 or so birdwatchers who visited the islands during the autumn, the generally very good situation in such a sensitive area is extremely encouraging. The need for all birdwatching visitors actively to maintain these good relations (and not to turn a blind eye when misdemeanours take place) is obvious. (P/JG)

Weather maps get the chop 'As a result of the Government's determination to reduce public expenditure and the number of Civil Servants engaged upon work that, although desirable, is not absolutely essential', detailed daily meteorological maps are no longer being published in Britain. 'The annual saving resulting from these measures is estimated at £150,000.' Regular users—which will include all bird-migration researchers—must question whether this small saving in the Government's budget is justified, especially when it involves the loss (presumably and regrettably permanent) of six specialist posts in the Meteorological Office.

Daily synoptic charts are, however, still available, in the form of the *European Daily Weather Report*, on subscription from the West German Meteorological Service, the Deutscher Wetterdienst, Zentralamt

D-6050, Frankfurter Strasse 135, Offenbach am Main, Federal Republic of Germany. This daily report is also available, on loan, from the library at the Meteorological Office, London Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2SZ. (JTRS)

Bowerbird found The Yellow-fronted Gardener Bowerbird *Amblyornis flavifrons*, a species hitherto known only from three or four specimens which appeared in Europe in the 19th-century heyday of the plumage trade, has at long last been found in the wild. Prof. Jared Diamond of the University of California Medical School made this exciting discovery, in rain-forest in the largely unexplored Gauttier Mountains of Irian Barat in New Guinea, while helping an Indonesian government ornithological survey. He estimated the presence of a thousand or more in the area studied, describing the bird as 'a fat, chunky robin with an incredibly glorious golden-orange crest'—'robin' of course referring to the American kind.

Bird numbers The proceedings of a symposium on 'Estimating numbers of terrestrial birds', held in California in October 1980, have been published by the Cooper Ornithological Society as No. 6 in their series 'Studies in avian biology'. Copies (US\$20, incl p & p, cheques payable to Cooper Ornithological Society) are available from Allen Press Inc., PO Box 368, Lawrence, Kansas 66044, USA.

Through the Bamboo Curtain Interested in birding in China? If so, Study China Travel Ltd is offering 14 study visits in 1982, including an ornithological one to northeast China led by Tom Lawson and Chris Perrins. Full details from the firm at 27 Leyland Road, London SE12 8DS.

Rarities problem? Writing in *Country Life* in 1928, R. L. Turner commented 'This particular bird—a Greenland Wheatear—seemed to resent being stared at—perhaps birds do. They have no privacy nowadays when their most intimate domestic concerns are spied upon by people armed with binoculars and by photographers: the man with a gun at least shot you dead without bothering over-much about your inmost secrets.' (Contributed by Peter Conder)

New recorder Dr M. V. Bell, Department of Marine Biochemistry, St Fittick's Road, Aberdeen, has taken over from Dr A. G. Knox as recorder for Aberdeenshire and north Kincardineshire.

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Unless stated otherwise, all dates refer to November.

The weather was influenced mainly by nearby anticyclones. Early in the month, one drifted eastward over the country and into western Europe giving a northerly to easterly airflow across the North Sea from 5th to 9th. Thereafter, west to northwest winds persisted until the end of the month, with pressure remaining high to the south and west. Northwesterly gales affected northern areas, but no very severe conditions occurred.

Seabirds

The arrival of the more northerly gulls began during October, with ten **Glaucous Gulls** *Larus hyperboreus* noted in Shetland, and by early November several were reported in the Aberdeen area and others at Thurston and Meols (Merseyside) (plate 36). The venerable **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoideus* which has haunted the Mersey Estuary for 25 winters was again in residence on 15th; others had been seen in Shetland waters in October, and one turned up at Dungeness (Kent) on 19th. **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* appeared inland at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 28th and at Chew



Valley Lake (Avon) on 29th, with coastal sightings from Balmedie (Grampian) and two in the Mersey Estuary throughout the month. Chew Valley Lake also produced a yellow-legged **Herring Gull** *L. argentatus* and a dead **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* on 28th. Another casualty was an immature **Long-tailed Skua** *S. longicaudus* found dead at Drums (Grampian) on 7th.

Wading birds

The West Country provided the only exceptional reports, with a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* near Wadebridge (Cornwall) on 8th (plate 33) and the second British record of a **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* (or perhaps the same bird), this time near

33. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Cornwall, November 1981 (S. C. Hutchings)



Exeter (Devon) from 22nd. The **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* at Magor (Gwent) stayed into November (plates 34 & 35), but became progressively more elusive.



Birds of prey

The easterly winds in the first part of the month produced a small influx of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* in the south-east. Singles were seen at Walberswick and Hadleigh (Suffolk) on 7th and at Dungeness on 9th, and further sightings came from Orford (Suffolk) on 14th, St Osyth (Essex) on 22nd and Glen Esk and Glen Lethnot (both Tayside) on 21st and 22nd. A **Buzzard** *B. buteo* was an unusual visitor to Tresco (Isles of Scilly) on 10th, and a wandering **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* was reported at St Osyth on 22nd.

Wildfowl

This month's influx of wintering ducks did not bring many unusual species, although **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were seen at Rostherne Mere (Cheshire) on 8th and at Dungeness on 14th. The last locality also reported two Nearctic ducks: a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* on 28th and a **Teal** *A. crecca carolinensis* on 25th.

Passerines

During the period of easterlies, reports of late Continental vagrants included a **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* on St Agnes (Isles of Scilly) on 6th and 7th, a maximum of three **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus* between 5th and 10th, also on the Isles of Scilly, and up to two others at Benacre (Suffolk) between 15th and 19th. There were single late **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* on St Mary's and on Tresco (both Isles of Scilly) on 5th and 10th. At the

34 & 35. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Gwent, November 1981 (left, Roy Twigg; below, R. Tidman)





36. First-winter Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Merseyside, November 1981 (P. M. Harris)



37. Juvenile Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Kent, October 1981 (Ian Castle)

last locality, also on 10th, 45 **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* occurred and, earlier, on 7th and 8th, one at Dungeness was identified as belonging to an eastern race. A **Serin** *Serinus serinus* also visited Dungeness on 5th, and a **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, unusual in northwest England, occurred at Thurstaston from 9th to 12th. The only other one reported was at Tresco on 10th. The main attraction late in the month was two **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* at the 'reserve of the year', Blacktoft (Humberside), from 25th. Birdwatchers spent many frustrating hours scanning the reedbeds waiting for the occasional brief appearances by these two birds.

Other notable records included two **Ravens** *Corvus corax* at Burton Marsh (Cheshire) throughout November, a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* at Bamford (Suffolk) on

12th, a **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* at Halling (Kent) on 31st October (plate 37), and a very late **Swift** *Apus apus* at Sizewell (Suffolk) on 11th.

Latest news

In early January, two **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Horning (Norfolk); two **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), where also **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*, and another at Colwyn Bay (Clwyd); **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* at Southport (Merseyside); **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* at Scarborough (North Yorkshire); **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* on Hayle Estuary (Cornwall); **Blue-winged Teal** at Kingsbridge (Devon), where also **Lesser Yellow-legs** *Tringa flavipes*; **Rough-legged Buzzards** at Horsey (Norfolk), Blythburgh (Suffolk) and Elmley (Kent).

Reviews

A Twitcher's Diary. By Richard Millington. Blandford Press, Poole, 1981. 192 pages; 14 colour illustrations; numerous black-and-white line drawings. £8.95.

This well-produced book, describing where and when the author saw 300 species in Britain in a year, is nice to dip into rather than a good solid read. The preface defines a twitcher, presumably for non-twitchers. It defines *some*—but the author knows as well as I do that not all are scientists, nor conservationists in any *concrete* way, nor are some in the least concerned with aesthetics! Agreed, twitchers are harmless enough (and most certainly have every right to watch birds in their own preferred way), but many fall short of the writer's own appreciation and acute observation of birds, and a few are as much derided by other twitchers as by anyone else. To draw birds, Richard Millington *has* to look hard at them, and inevitably it shows. (Several of the records, incidentally, do not appear in the county bird reports, to which he has not contributed.) The bulk of the book—aimed at twitchers?—is in semi-note form and appears to assume that the reader has the same prior knowledge of the birds as had the author. Suddenly, with no explanation and no hint of how (or if) information was obtained we find ourselves at a site where 'the' whatever it was—never 'a' and never introduced—did or did not appear. The mechanics are not mentioned—and the style sometimes reduces exciting twitching largely to somewhat predictable routine. Only occasionally does it rise to real heights of enthusiasm—rare birds are surely all about excitement (and depression), triumphs and disasters, painful frustration, hard work, luck and sheer elation—but the emotions are rarely evident here. Nor is there much humour—another major element of good twitching—*and no people!* There are enough good birds to turn any reader green—so perhaps superlatives would simply be quickly exhausted. Artificially contrived (as opposed to naturally evolved) twitchers' vocabulary (which as often as not indicates a lack of any other sort) is mercifully sparse and the numerous potted descriptions are useful and excellent. The standard of the drawings—over 230 of them—each with an informative caption—is also high. Some lack a bit of zip and are a little insubstantial—my own preference being for bolder lighting effects to produce stronger modelling and more solidity, but of course this is a personal view. The more stylish ones—the Spotted and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Snow Bunting, Red-rumped Swallows, Little Stint, Bittern and Crested Tit to select a few—are really fine, firmly yet delicately drawn and full of useful, carefully observed detail. They merit close study. So, my reactions to this book are mixed—principally, perhaps, because the publishers had too little definition of its aims and it is, therefore, an opportunity missed.

R. A. HUME

The Cuckoo. By Ian Wyllie. Batsford, London, 1981. 176 pages; 15 colour photographs, 35 black-and-white plates. £8.95.

Ian Wyllie began studying Cuckoos seriously when he became involved with the making of the BBC's *Private Life of the Cuckoo*. Over six years, in a Cambridgeshire complex of gravel-pits and riverside reedbeds, he studied 1,764 Reed Warbler nests, of which 170 were parasitised by Cuckoos. His own field work included attempts to catch adult Cuckoos (which proved very difficult), so that some could be fitted with wing-tags or small radio transmitters in order that individual birds could be followed during the breeding season. This work, together with an extensive review of the literature on Cuckoos, forms the basis of Ian Wyllie's first book.

Chapters on the classification, distribution and general characteristics of the world's cuckoos are followed by others which deal mainly with the European Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: its plumage, posture, size and weight; migration; food; songs and calls; the social system; hosts (mainly of the European Cuckoo, but also including some of the other parasitic species); egg-laying; and eggs and young. New findings from the observations of wing-tagged birds and radiotelemetry are incorporated in the chapters on food, the social system and egg-laying.

The many photographs greatly enhance the book and are largely by the author. They mainly depict various aspects of the Cuckoo's breeding cycle, including a superb sequence of colour photographs of an egg-laying Cuckoo. The writings of two great authors on the Cuckoo, Edgar Chance and E. C. Stuart Baker, are now 40 years old, and Ian Wyllie has been successful in providing up-to-date information on this fascinating bird.

R. A. MORGAN

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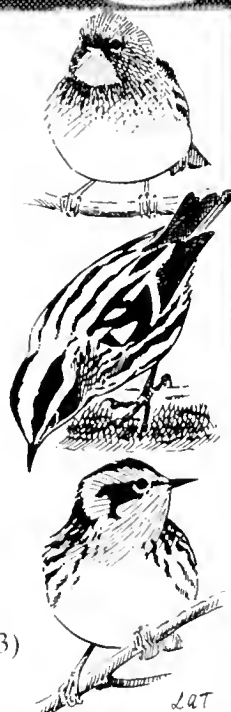
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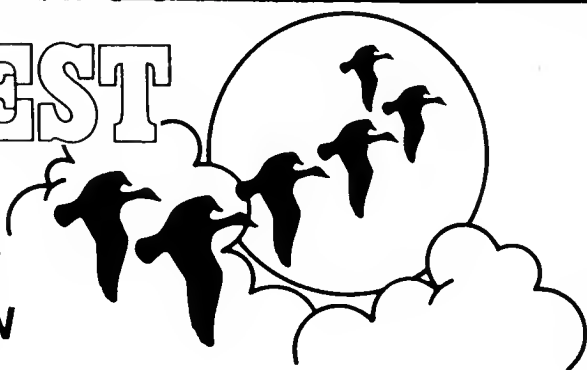


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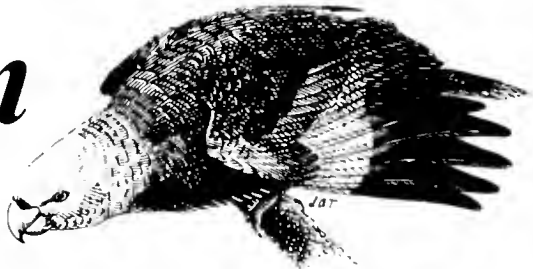
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1982



The decline of the Cirl Bunting in Britain, 1968-80

H. P. Sitters



In recent years, there have been widespread reports of a decline in the population of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* in Britain. The purpose of this paper is to assess the change that has taken place on the basis of data published in county bird reports. These data (summarised in table 1 and fig. 1) show that in practically every county there has been a substantial decline.

Observers familiar with the status of this species in a particular county may well feel that the figures in table 1 are optimistic. There are, however, at least five reasons for supposing that the Cirl Bunting is under-recorded in the county reports. First, the species is not well known to the majority of observers and has an insignificant song, which is easily confused with other species (such as Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*). Secondly, it occurs in areas which are often otherwise ornithologically uninteresting. Thirdly, territories can be extremely large, with the result that, even if Cirl Buntings are present, they can be very hard to find. Fourthly, individual pairs are prone to move about from year to year, so that those which have apparently disappeared may have only moved one or two kilometres. Fifthly, observer coverage is casual and patchy. The last three factors probably lie behind the many instances in the reports where the species has been recorded from a particular locality on a number of occasions over several years but with many intervening years without any records. In such cases, it is often reasonable to assume that Cirl Buntings have been in the vicinity all the

time. Thus, an analysis of county report data in relation to this species requires a certain amount of interpretation. The figures contained in table 1 are, therefore, my best estimate of the population in the light of the factors involved.

Table 1. Estimated number of pairs of Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* in each county during 1968-80, based on county bird report data

	1968-72	1973-76	1977-80	1980 only
Norfolk	2-4	0	0-1	0
Kent				
Essex				
Gwent				
Hertfordshire				
East Sussex	16-20	10-15	4-8	1-3
West Sussex	8-10	3-5	1-2	0-1
Surrey	2-6	1-3	2-3	2-3
Cambridgeshire	0	0	1	0
Buckinghamshire	6-12	6-12	3-4	1-2
Berkshire	2-3	2-3	0	0
Oxfordshire	2-4	2-4	2-3	0-1
West Midlands	2-5	1	1	0
Avon	2-3	2-3	1-2	0-1
Hampshire	7-14	3-6	3-4	3-4
Wiltshire	1-2	1-2	2-3	0-1
Somerset	30-40	18-23	16-21	10-14
Dorset	8-12	2-3	2-3	1-2
Cornwall	20-30	15-18	8-10	6-8
	108-165	66-98	46-66	24-40
Devon	?	140-150	?	?
	206-248			

The figures show that, outside Devon, the last decade has seen the population reduced by about 60%, with significant numbers remaining only in Cornwall and Somerset. The chances for the survival of the remnant population in other counties must now be regarded as very low indeed.

The current situation in Devon is less clear than that for other counties. The Cirl Bunting population is so relatively large and widespread in Devon that a special survey is necessary to obtain an accurate figure. The most recent such survey (Sitters 1975) located 106 pairs in 1973 and 136 pairs in 1974. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the state of the population in Devon in 1973-74 and in more recent years because no such detailed survey has been repeated. The number of breeding-season records submitted for the *Devon Bird Report* has, however, not declined (there were 44 in 1980), and experienced observers consider that the population has remained fairly stable. On the assumption that this is correct, the total British population in 1980 is unlikely to have been more than 200 pairs, and may well have been as low as 130 pairs. With such small numbers, there is real concern for the future. For this reason, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel has recently added Cirl Bunting to the list of species it considers, and the BTO has launched a census during summer 1982 (see page 139).

In the course of the fieldwork for *The Atlas* during 1968-72, Cirl Buntings were found in 174 10-km squares (Sharrock 1976). This, however, is the

cumulative total of five years of fieldwork, and there are many instances of *Atlas* registrations which clearly relate to birds which appeared in only one or two years. Sharrock suggested that the total British population during 1968-72 was in the range of 350-700 pairs. In view of the figures mentioned above, I consider that this was optimistic and that, at the time, the population was more likely to have been about 250-300 pairs.

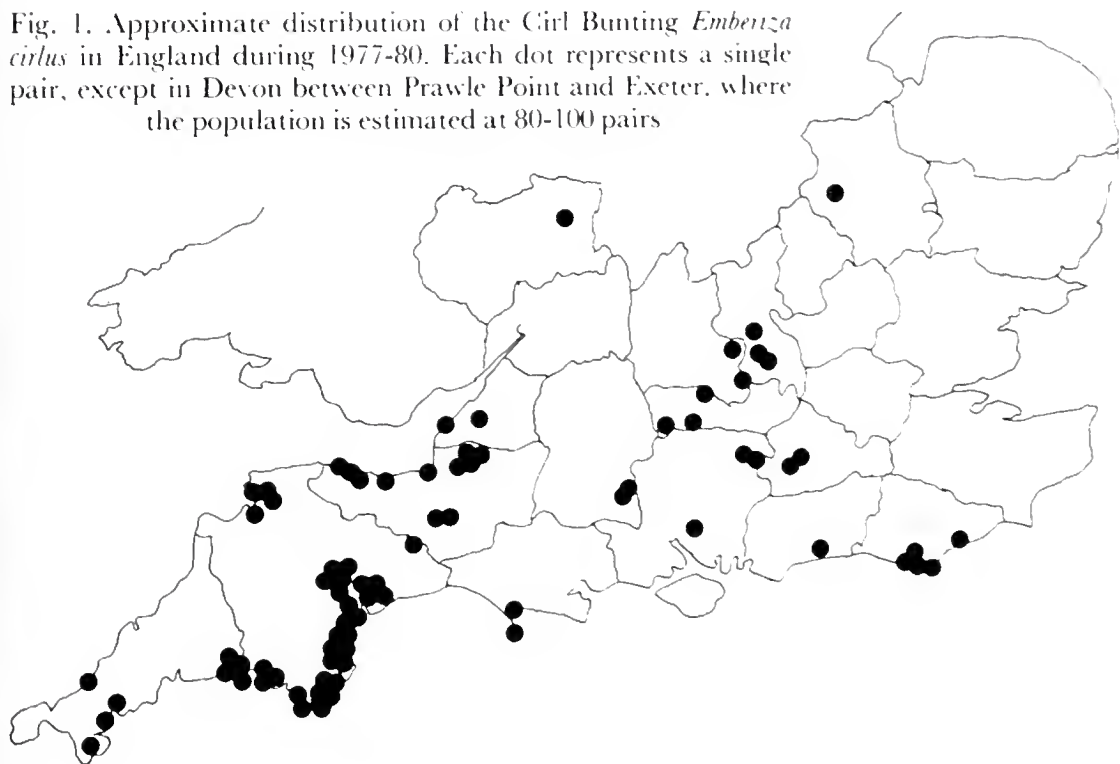
The Cirl Bunting may not have colonised southern England until the end of the 18th century: it is not mentioned in the literature before Montagu found the species around Kingsbridge in 1800. During the 19th and early part of the present century, the range extended north to the Midlands and Wales, with occasional breeding records as far as Yorkshire and Cumberland. Since the 1920s, the breeding range has contracted southwards, and in the last 20-30 years there has also been a considerable reduction in the Cirl Bunting population of many southern counties. A southwards shift of the population has also been noted in France and Belgium since 1930 (Yeatman 1976).

The Cirl Bunting is principally a Mediterranean species and is sometimes regarded as the Mediterranean replacement of the Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*. There are occasional references in the literature to interaction between the two species, which may amount to competition. There is, however, no evidence that, in Britain, the presence of Yellowhammers is in any way detrimental to Cirl Buntings.

The Cirl Bunting reaches the northern limit of its distribution in southern England, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the main reason for its fluctuation over the past two centuries is climatic.

The major proportion of the British population, perhaps 100 pairs, is now concentrated along the coastal strip between Prawle Point and Exeter (fig. 1). It is surely significant that this is generally an area of warm

Fig. 1. Approximate distribution of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius* in England during 1977-80. Each dot represents a single pair, except in Devon between Prawle Point and Exeter, where the population is estimated at 80-100 pairs



summers and mild winters, and is also sheltered from prevailing winds. Perhaps these are some of the climatic factors which are important for this species.

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to the relevant county report editors for many useful comments and for helping to fill in various gaps in the published data.

Summary

Estimates based on information published in the relevant county bird reports show a decline in the population of Gird Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* in Britain outside Devon from 108-165 pairs in 1968-72 to 66-98 in 1973-76 and 46-66 in 1977-80. The Devon population, censused in 1973 and 1974, has probably remained fairly static, at 140-150 pairs, or perhaps declined slightly. By 1980, there were probably only 160-200 pairs in the whole of Britain, and perhaps as few as 130 pairs.

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The origin of migrant Merlins on Fair Isle

Iain S. Robertson



The Merlin *Falco columbarius* is a regular migrant through Fair Isle, Shetland: in spring, passage is very light, but, in autumn, Merlins are seen almost daily, with up to ten individuals in a day. Using the daily census figures from Fair Isle Bird Observatory for 1948-80, the number of bird-days per autumn has been calculated (fig. 1). Merlins are fairly obvious birds and it is not thought that increased coverage in recent years has affected the totals recorded. This is borne out by the correlation between bird-days and numbers of Merlins trapped over the years.

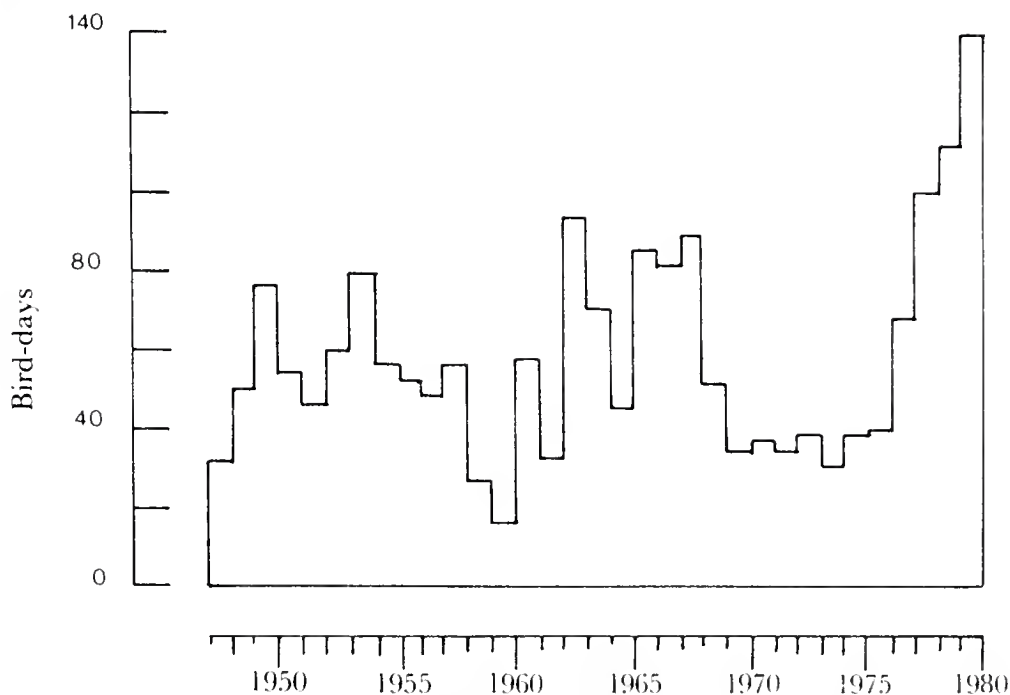


Fig. 1. Bird-days August-October of Merlins *Falco columbarius*, Fair Isle, Shetland, 1948-80

Butterfield (1954) and Williamson (1954) showed that measurements of Merlins trapped on Fair Isle were consistent with birds of the Icelandic race *subaesalon*. Butterfield (1954) cited two British recoveries of Merlins ringed as nestlings in Iceland, and these, coupled with the Fair Isle measurements, led him to recommend that *F. c. subaesalon* be admitted to the British and Irish list. Neither author appears to have considered Shetland as the possible origin of Fair Isle Merlins, perhaps because of Salmonsens (1935) statement that those breeding in Faeroe and northern Britain were intermediate between *subaesalon* and the Continental and southern British race *aesalon*. Salmonsens (1935) suggested that there was a cline of increasing size from south to north.

In the early 1970s, a small number of Merlins was ringed as nestlings in Shetland. In 1976-80, 188 nestlings were ringed there by J. D. Okill: 13 were controlled on Fair Isle in autumn, and analysis of their measurements casts doubt upon Williamson's (1954) assertion that Fair Isle Merlins originate from Iceland. An analysis of Merlin biometrics was undertaken using data from the Observatory for the years 1957-80 (table 1); data from different measuring techniques before 1957 are not compatible, and are, therefore, not included. It is apparent that the measurements of Shetland-bred Merlins are outside the range for the race *aesalon*, but well within that for the Icelandic race, which is distinguished by its larger size and darker coloration. It is not possible to compare coloration of Shetland Merlins without a series of study skins, but, on size, they would appear indistinguishable from the Icelandic race.

Although Williamson (1954) showed some correlation between Merlin arrivals and weather systems that favoured a northwesterly origin, this is less convincing when one considers that Shetland-bred Merlins face a sea-crossing of only 35km to reach Fair Isle, which is normally clearly

Table 1. Biometric details of Merlins *Falco columbarius* on Fair Isle, Shetland, 1957-80, compared with details for Shetland-bred individuals and the two races *subaeson* and *aeson*

Data for the races *subaeson* and *aeson* are from Cramp & Simmons (1980)

SD = standard deviation

	<i>F.c.</i> <i>subaeson</i>	Fair Isle- ringed	Shetland- bred	<i>F.c.</i> <i>aeson</i>
<hr/>				
WING LENGTH (mm)				
Males				
No.	4	44	7	24
Mean	208	208.4	207.2	199
SD	4.69	5.14	3.09	3.55
Females				
No.	11	44	8	29
Mean	227	227.1	228.6	217
SD	2.61	4.73	6.16	3.62
WEIGHT (g)				
Males				
No.	—	44	7	16
Mean	—	180.9	178.2	162
SD	—	20.84	14.2	23.74
Females				
No.	—	44	8	14
Mean	—	230.6	220.9	212
SD	—	22.5	9.85	38.75

visible from the south end of Shetland Mainland. With such a short crossing, birds are likely to be affected only by severe weather or by fog.

There has been no significant change in the number of bird-days per autumn for Merlins on Fair Isle since 1948 (fig. 1). Studies by Okill *et al.* (1980) suggest that the Shetland breeding population is 30-40 pairs, and there is no evidence that this has changed significantly in the last 40 years. The average brood size is about 3.0; assuming that some nests fail completely, and that some chicks from successful nests will die before dispersal, a figure of 50-80 fledged young per year is possible. Most Shetland Merlins do not remain in their natal areas during the winter (in fact, there are very few records of any immature Merlins in Shetland in winter): the young disperse before fledging, and by mid August a build-up of juveniles occurs in the South Mainland (Okill *et al.* 1980).

The main passage through Fair Isle starts about mid August and continues into November (November records have been omitted from bird-day totals since this month was incompletely covered in earlier years). The mean number of bird-days per autumn is 115: if every sighting referred to a different individual, an average of 115 Merlins passes through each autumn. It is, however, more realistic to divide this figure by three or four, as ringing records show that some individuals remain for at least a week: this gives a figure of about 30 individuals on average, or as many as 80 in a 'good' year such as 1980. Although these figures are little more than guesses, they do suggest that the number may be small enough for the entire passage to consist of Shetland-bred birds. (In fact, some in the size range of the race *aeson* have been identified, so at least a few may be of Scandi-

navian origin.) There is also a record of a Merlin ringed as a nestling in Orkney being controlled on Fair Isle in September of the same year: showing that some Merlins from farther south may disperse through Fair Isle.

Assuming the Shetland Merlin population to be about 35 pairs, with about 80% of nests successful and a brood size of 3.0 for successful nests, approximately 84 young are produced each year, making 420 young over the five-year period. The 188 nestlings ringed by Okill in this period represent about 45% of 420; therefore, 55% of the Shetland nestlings were unringed. Fair Isle trapped 39 Merlins in the same period: 13 had been ringed by Okill, and, by inference, a further 16 unringed individuals were also from Shetland. Of 39 trapped Merlins, this gives a total of 29 (74%) of Shetland origin. As the exact population, number of successful nests and brood size are not known, the figures must be treated with some caution, but the figure of 74% does suggest that the majority of Merlins passing through Fair Isle in autumn may be of Shetland origin. It is certainly safe to say that, contrary to previous belief, the Merlins at Fair Isle do not originate largely from Iceland.

Acknowledgments

I thank Fair Isle Bird Observatory for access to records. Dr D. T. Parkin kindly read the manuscript and made helpful comments, and J. D. Okill helped in discussion and also read the draft.

Summary

An analysis of biometrics of Merlins *Falco columbarius* was undertaken using data from Fair Isle Bird Observatory for August-October 1957-80. In conjunction with controls of Shetland-ringed individuals, this suggests that, contrary to previous assertions, the Merlin passage on Fair Isle, Shetland, consists mainly of individuals bred in Shetland rather than in Iceland.

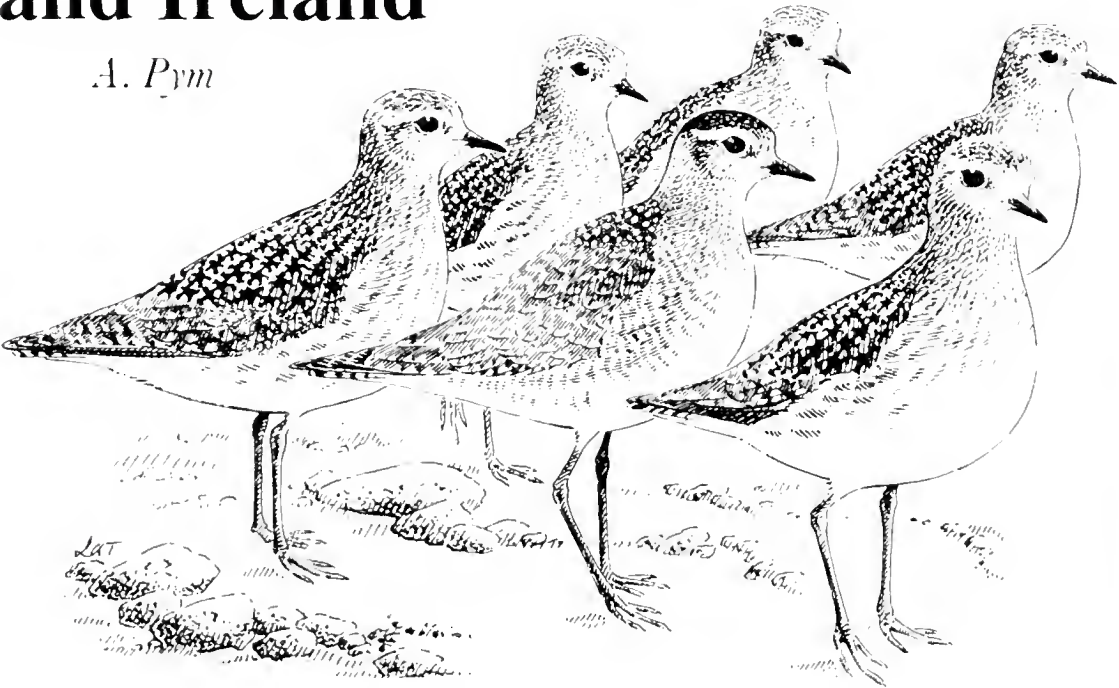
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Identification of Lesser Golden Plover and status in Britain and Ireland

A. Pym



There are two races of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*: the Nearctic *P. d. dominica* and the Asiatic *P. d. fulva*. Both travel great distances between their breeding and wintering grounds (fig. 1), and in recent years the species has been recorded with increasing frequency in Britain and Ireland.



Fig. 1. Principal breeding and wintering ranges of the two races of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

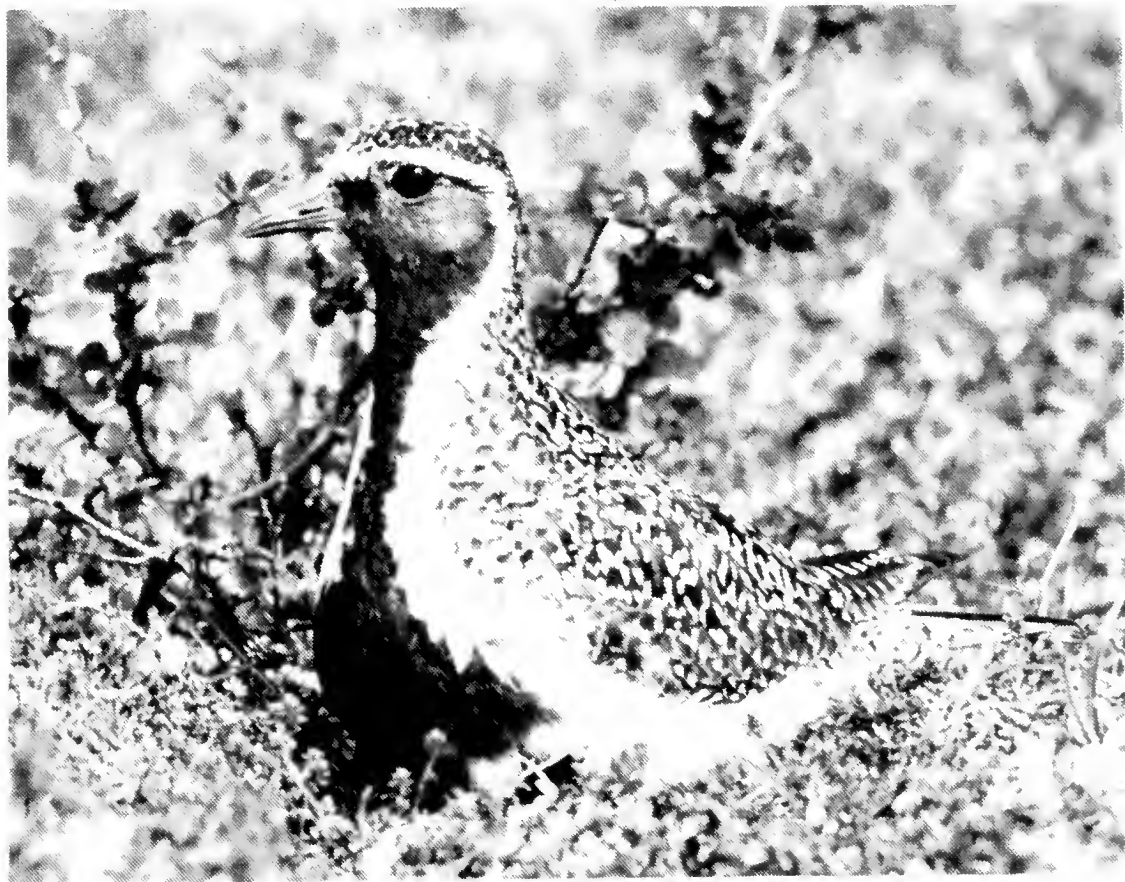
Specific identification

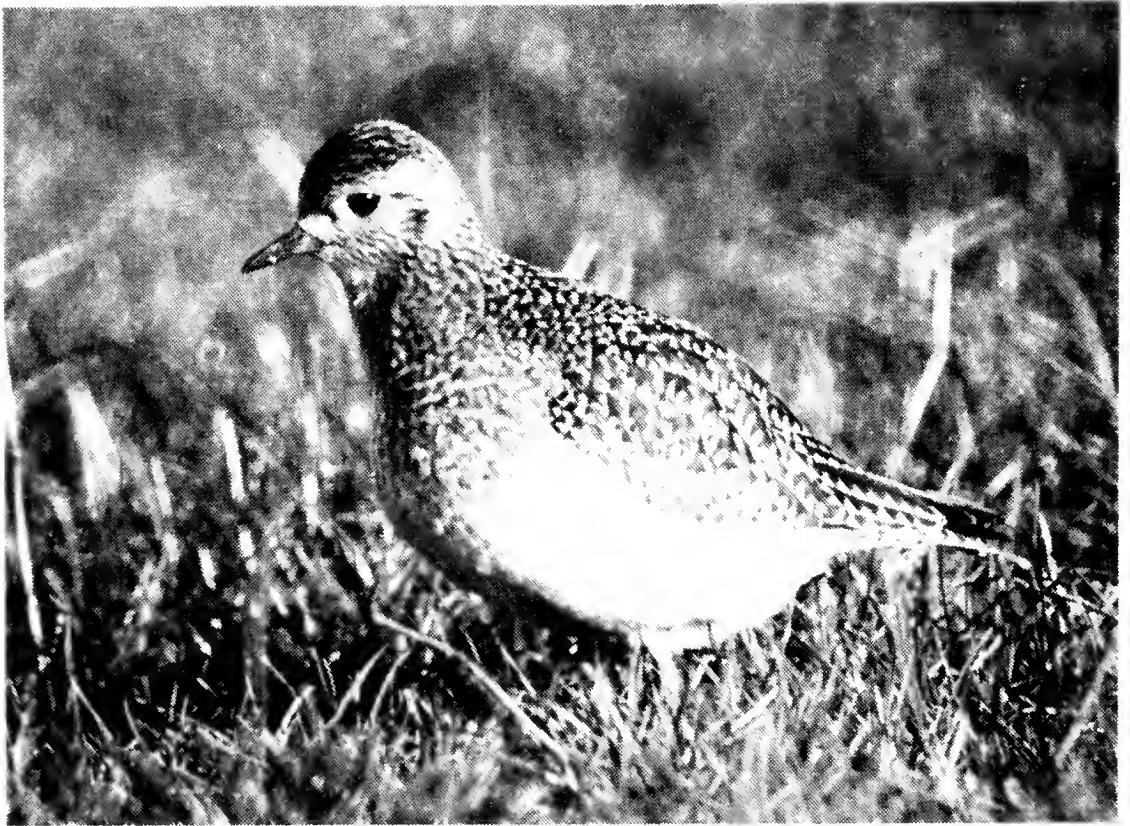
In comparison with Golden Plover *P. apricaria* (plates 38-40), Lesser Golden (plates 41-50) is smaller, noticeably so in the air, when its narrower wings are also evident. When alert or feeding, it is slimmer, with a less rounded belly, but this feature is not visible when it is resting in a puffed-out or hunched position, when it looks neckless, compact and comparable in bulk with a Golden Plover. The large-headed appearance of Lesser Golden Plover results from a slimmer, waisted neck and is accentuated by promi-



38. Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* showing whitish underwings, Mid Glamorgan, April 1981 (Howard Nicholls)

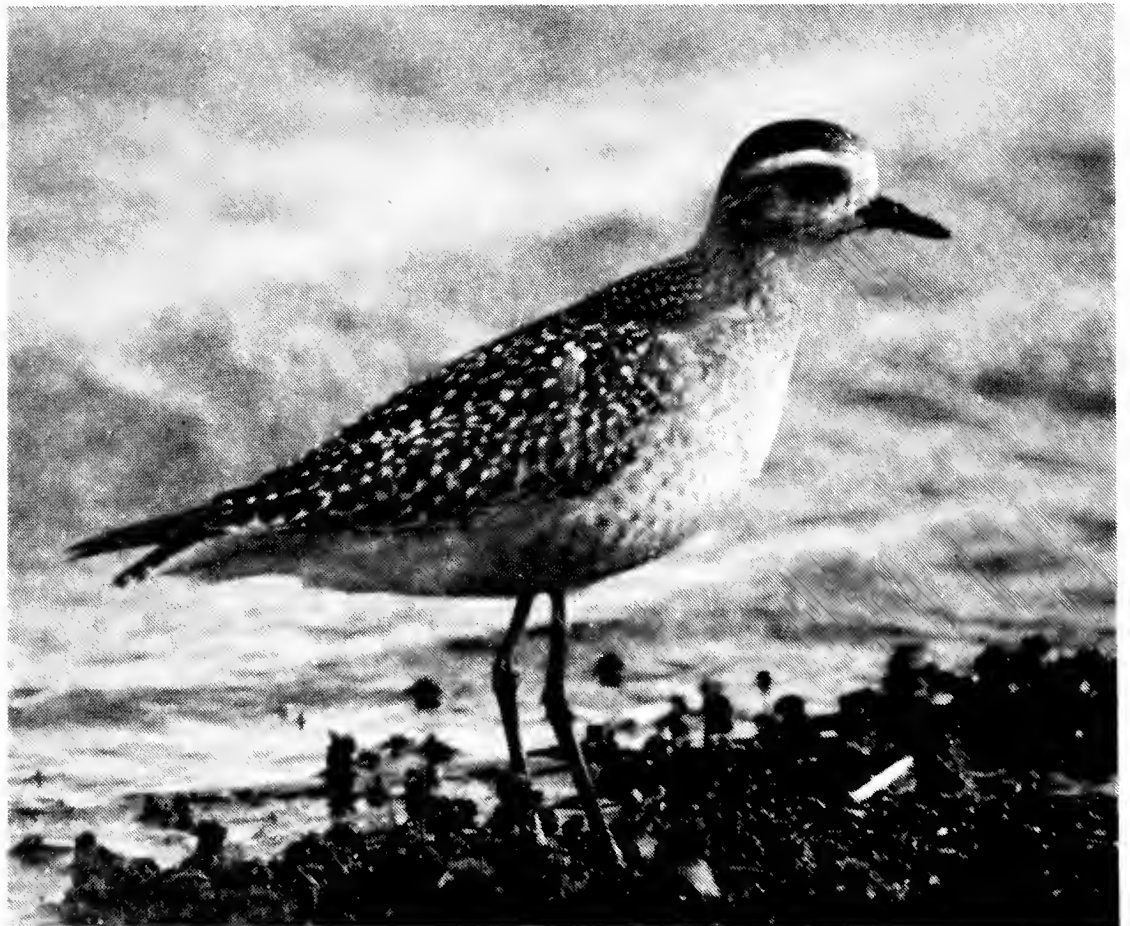
39. Adult summer male Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria altifrons*, Sweden, July 1959 (P. O. Svanberg)





40. Adult winter Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, North Humberside, January 1973 (Richard Vaughan)

41. Juvenile Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica dominica*, Cornwall, October 1980 (Gordon Langsbury)



42. Winter Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva*, Sri Lanka, January 1977 (Peder Weibull)



43. Juvenile Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva*, USSR, September 1975 (Yuri Shubnet)



nent supercilia, which are normally bolder than those of Golden Plover. Additionally, the bill is longer in relation to the head.

Proportionately longer legs give Lesser Golden a 'leggy' appearance—individuals with Golden Plovers can appear the same height or even taller—and this, together with its build, can make it appear 'shank-like'. The legs are dark grey or blue-grey, but look black at a distance.

The wings are proportionately longer than those of Golden Plover and, when folded, are finer and typically project well past the tail-tip; the projection is, however, variable, being only slight on some individuals (wings of some Golden Plovers may also project marginally beyond the tail-tip). The underwing is dusky or fulvous-grey with smoke-grey axillaries (plate 44), drabber than the white underwing and axillaries of Golden

44. Winter Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva* showing dark underwing, Thailand, February 1980 (B. A. E. Marr)



Plover (plate 38). Juvenile and first-winter Golden Plovers may show very pale fawn underwing-coverts, particularly in certain lights, but not the greyness of Lesser Golden (a feature seen in flight, but most easily on landing, as plovers often hold their wings up momentarily before folding them). As with Golden Plover, the wing-bar is individually variable; it is formed chiefly by white on the shafts of the primaries and secondaries, but both species can also show white on the webs of the inner primaries.

Verrall (1978) and Brown & Ellis (1980) recorded aberrant, grey-morph Golden Plovers resembling adult winter Lesser Golden of the race *dominica*, but both individuals lacked specific features of Lesser Golden, such as grey axillaries.



Fig. 2. Silhouettes of Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (left), and the two races of Lesser Golden Plover *P. dominica dominica* (centre) and *P. d. fulva* (right), showing comparative body sizes and leg lengths

In Britain and Ireland, Lesser Golden Plovers are usually solitary; even when accompanying Golden Plovers, they tend to remain at the edge of the flock, although they will fly with the flock. When feeding, both species run rapidly, then suddenly stop and peck or probe for food.

Racial identification

In general, typical *fulva* are smaller, proportionately longer-legged and brighter-plumaged than *dominica* (fig. 2). The main differences between the two races are summarised in table 1 and set out in detail for all plumages below.

Table 1. Summary of identification features of the two races of Lesser Golden Plover
Pluvialis dominica

Features	Typical <i>P. d. dominica</i>	Typical <i>P. d. fulva</i>
Size	Slightly smaller than Golden Plover <i>P. apricaria</i>	Noticeably smaller than Golden Plover
Leg length	Longer in proportion to body size than Golden Plover	Comparable with, or longer than, <i>P. d. dominica</i>
SUMMER PLUMAGE		
Impression	Like Grey Plover <i>P. squatarola</i>	Like Golden Plover
Supercilia	Broad	Narrower
White lateral line through flanks	Occasional	Regular
WINTER PLUMAGE		
Supercilia	Whitish	Yellowish
Nape	Grey without prominent yellow edgings	Brown with prominent yellow edgings
Upperparts	Dull spangling	Bright spangling
Underparts	Dull; little or no contrast of colours	Bright; distinct contrast of colours
JUVENILE		
Supercilia	White	Yellowish-white
Nape	Grey without prominent yellow edgings	Brown with prominent yellow edgings
Upperparts	Lemon spangling, fading rapidly to whitish	Gold spangling
Underparts (ground)	Dull; grey or grey-brown	Very bright; yellowish-white
Underparts (pattern)	Extensive barring	Limited streaking

Adult summer

Male *dominica* has black underparts from chin to undertail coverts, the latter sometimes barred or irregularly blotched (female has brownish-black underparts, noticeable on skins, but colour difference probably difficult to discern in the field); white of forehead and supercilia extends strongly down sides of neck and breast, but not onto flanks (plates 45 & 46). Both sexes of *fulva* have brownish-black underparts; white on forehead, supercilia and sides of neck and breast generally less extensive than on *dominica*; white extends as broken or spotted line through flanks. Female (and first-summer male) *dominica* have broader supercilia and larger white areas on sides of breast, the latter sometimes virtually joining in the centre; white feathers are sometimes mixed in the underparts and the white line may continue through the



45. Adult summer Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica dominica*, Canada, June 1977 (C. H. Greenewalt)

46. Adult summer Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica dominica*, Cleveland, July 1979 (M. A. Blick)



flanks, which are then heavily barred. Female *fulva* may also have white feathers in the underparts. Feathers of upperparts of *fulva* are tipped and notched gold, brighter and more plentiful than on *dominica*, and comparable with Golden Plover. Full breeding plumage of *dominica* superficially resembles Grey Plover *P. squatarola*. Typical *fulva* in full breeding plumage (plate 47) should be distinguishable by smaller size, brighter upperparts and presence of broken white flank line, but some, particularly from west Alaska, are extremely difficult to separate. (Note that winter-plumaged *dominica* have occasionally been recorded in summer.)

Transitional plumage: summer to winter

Body moult begins in July or August (mid July in the case of *fulva*). On *dominica*, pale grey and white (in *fulva*, buff-yellow) feathers appear in the underparts, first on face, throat and breast. The race *fulva* is brighter than *dominica*, and the new feathers contrast strongly with the faded breeding plumage. Male and female *dominica* can show white flank line, even in early stages of moult, extending to undertail-coverts; as moult continues, underparts become irregularly blotched. Remnants of summer plumage may be retained until at least November.



47. Adult summer Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva*, USSR (print received from B. E. Flint)

Adult winter

On *dominica*, virtually white chin, throat and belly contrast little with rest of drab, dull grey underparts; foreneck and breast slightly streaked or mottled. The race *fulva* is much brighter, with face, chin, throat and foreneck buff-yellow, chin and throat sometimes lightly streaked; breast fawn edged with bright yellow and contrasting strongly with white belly and flanks, though belly and flanks can have yellow wash, with flanks lightly streaked. Nape of *dominica*

48. Adult Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva* transitional from winter to summer plumage, Australia, April 1977 (Donald & Molly Trounson)



grey, contrasting with darker crown and dark brown or brown-black mantle, and lacking prominent yellow spots or streaks; wing-coverts paler brown; upperpart feathers narrowly edged buff-yellow and grey-white, more prominent on coverts than on mantle and scapulars (by late winter, some *dominica* show no yellow on wing-coverts or mantle and scapulars, although rump and uppertail-coverts retain some colour). On *fulva*, crown, nape and mantle are uniform brownish-black, showing little or no contrast, and yellow spots and streaks continue from crown, over nape, to join those of mantle; upperpart feathers edged bright yellow-gold when fresh, though extent of spangling less than on Golden Plover, whose upperpart feathering is notched. On *dominica*, prominent white supercilia give capped effect; on *fulva*, supercilia can be prominent white, but more usually yellowish, blending with face and less conspicuous than on *dominica*. General pattern of *dominica* drabber, with grever effect than the race *fulva*, which is much brighter (plate 42).

Transitional plumage: winter to summer

Many *dominica* start body moult in March, but some (mainly first-winters) do not have black underparts until May. Adult *fulva* (plate 48) start in February or March (first-winters late March or April), and full summer plumage is acquired from April.

Juvenile

Underparts of *dominica* (plates 41 & 49) are drab grey, with extensive barring (on almost entire underparts) caused by greyish-brown tips and centres to whitish feathers (variable replacement, fading and wear influence extent of barring after September); prominent whitish supercilia recall Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*. The race *fulva* (plates 43 & 50) is much brighter below, with face, neck and breast much yellower and supercilia yellowish-white; neck and breast very bright yellow when fresh, each feather narrowly tipped brown and with brown streak along shaft (feather tips wear off rapidly, leaving pattern of light streaking); yellow breast contrasts strongly with whitish belly and vent; flanks white, feathers tipped or barred brown, some with brown streaks along shafts (abrasion results in light streaking or barring on flanks); supercilia yellowish-white. The race *dominica* has brownish-black upperparts, feathers tipped and notched pale lemon-yellow of varying brightness (from September, colour fades rapidly, first on wing-coverts, to whitish); grey nape, without prominent yellow spots and streaks, contrasts with crown and mantle. On *fulva*, prominent yellow spots and streaks continue from crown down nape to brownish-black mantle, which has feathers tipped and

49. Juvenile Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica dominica*, Cornwall, October 1980 (P. Vines)



notched bright yellow-gold, as have scapulars and wing-coverts. General effect: *fulva* yellower above and below than *dominica*, with bright yellow upperpart spangling; *dominica* generally much greyer, looking yellow below, and superficially resembling juvenile Grey Plover *P. squatarola*.

First-winter

Both races virtually as adult winter. Some juvenile barring usually still visible on breast and flanks of *dominica* in November.

First-summer

In both races, some first-winter feathers retained, otherwise as adult summer (in *dominica*, male resembles female). Some attain only partial summer plumage: in *dominica*, with black, on only some feathers of underparts, restricted to small spot or streak near feather tips and giving mottled appearance; in *fulva*, with white feathers scattered in underparts, or with black spots only at tips of some underpart feathers.

Interbreeding and hybridisation

The breeding ranges of the two races overlap in Alaska and eastern Siberia (fig. 1), and, because some specimens are difficult to identify racially, Vaurie (1964, 1965) considered that they may interbreed in this area. Apparent hybrids between Lesser Golden Plover and Golden Plover have been recorded rarely in the USSR (Popham 1901, Stout 1967) and once in Malta (Borg 1976).

Voice

The calls (table 2) are arranged in eight groups and represent my interpretation of familiar sounds. Some calls, particularly single notes, may be uttered once or repeated several times.

Calls in groups 4 and 5 (distinctly disyllabic and resembling Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*) and groups 7 and 8 (similar to an anxious Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*) are apparently the most diagnostic of Lesser Golden Plover compared with Golden Plover.

Table 2. Call notes of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

References include: Alexander (1954), Bent (1929), Browne (1955), Haviland (1915), Nichols (1920), Sauer (1962) and Urner (1933), as well as Rarities Committee files. Complex calls of four or more notes, used primarily on the breeding territory, are omitted

Group	<i>P. d. dominica</i>	<i>P. d. fulva</i>
1	'chip', 'pit', 'pip', 'cheep'	'chirp', 'chirrup', 'peep'
2	'pu', 'pluu', 'hu', 'foo', 'que', 'quup', 'klu', 'kluu'	'pew', 'tew'
3	'coodle', 'doo-dle', 'tialoo', 'toodle-oo', 'oodle-oo', 'dloodlook'	'toodleu'
4	'tu-ee', 'tu-wee', 'too-ee', 'do-lee', 'too-lee'	'tu-ee', 'tyew-ee', 'tu-wee', 'thu-wee', 'ku-dee'
5	'chu-wit', 'chewick', 'kloo-it', 'choo-eet', 'chee-wheet', 'que-eep'	'pu-eet', 'too-wheet', 'dlu-eeep'
6	'tloo-i', 'too-loo-ee', 'tu-dle-dee', 'wheel-del-ee'	'toodlee', 'deedleek'
7	'pe-weee', 'peewit'	'pee-er-wee', 'ki-wee'
8	'kleet', 'kleep', 'klee-e-eet'	'kl-ee', 'kleee-yee', 'klee-ee-yee'

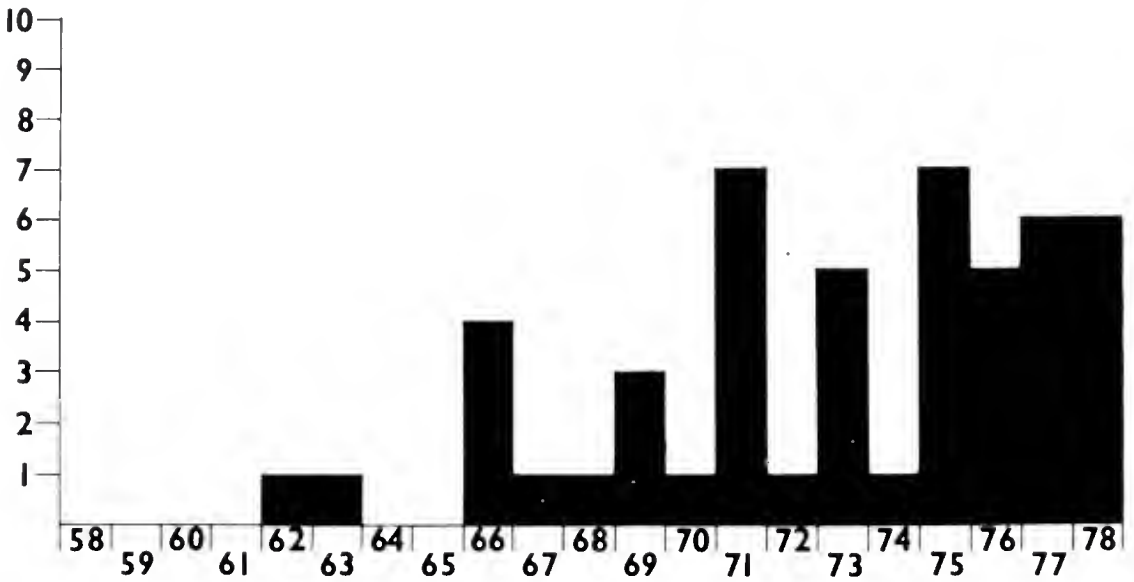


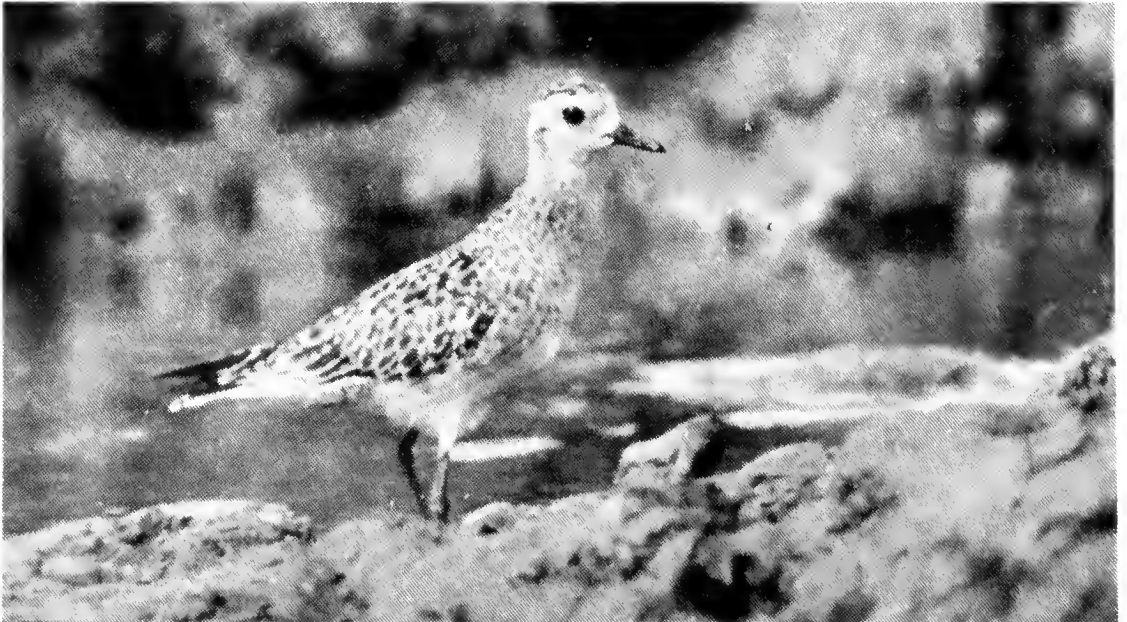
Fig. 3. Annual totals of Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* in Britain and Ireland, 1958-78

In the early 1960s, British and Irish records of Lesser Golden Plover became confused by the belief that the call of *fulva* was monosyllabic and that of *dominica* disyllabic, and that the races could be separated on this alone (M. J. Rogers *in litt.*). Table 2 shows that there is in fact no notable distinction in this respect between the calls of the two races.

Status in Britain and Ireland

Up to 1958, there were only six accepted records of Lesser Golden Plover in Britain and Ireland, but the species has been recorded annually since 1966 (fig. 3), with an average of six per year for the years 1975-78; during 1958-78 there were 50 accepted records: 37 in Britain and 13 in Ireland (M. J. Rogers *in litt.*). Obviously, the species has been overlooked in the past and, with increased observer coverage, better field identification and awareness

50. Juvenile Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva* acquiring first-winter plumage. Australia, October 1974 (Donald & Molly Trounson)



of vagrancy, the odd Golden Plover is now given more than a cursory glance.

Fig. 4 shows the distribution of records, and the obvious westerly bias. Examination of descriptions revealed that 41 (82%) showed the characters of *dominica*. In four instances (in Cornwall and Scilly), two individuals have been recorded together. Only three (6%) of the records refer to the race *fulva*, emphasising its rarity as a vagrant. Two counties (Lothian and Humberside) have recorded both races. Six records (12%) are not included

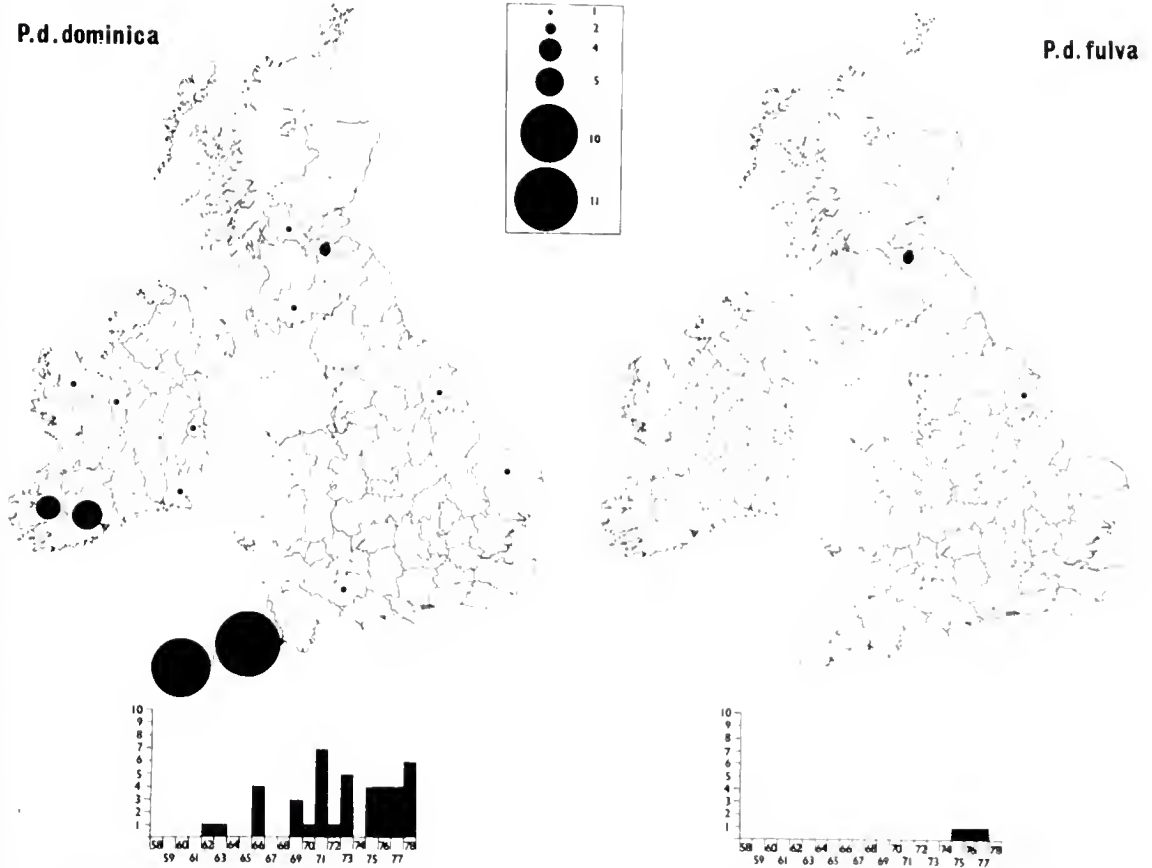


Fig. 4. Annual totals and geographical distribution within Britain and Ireland of the two races of Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, 1958-78

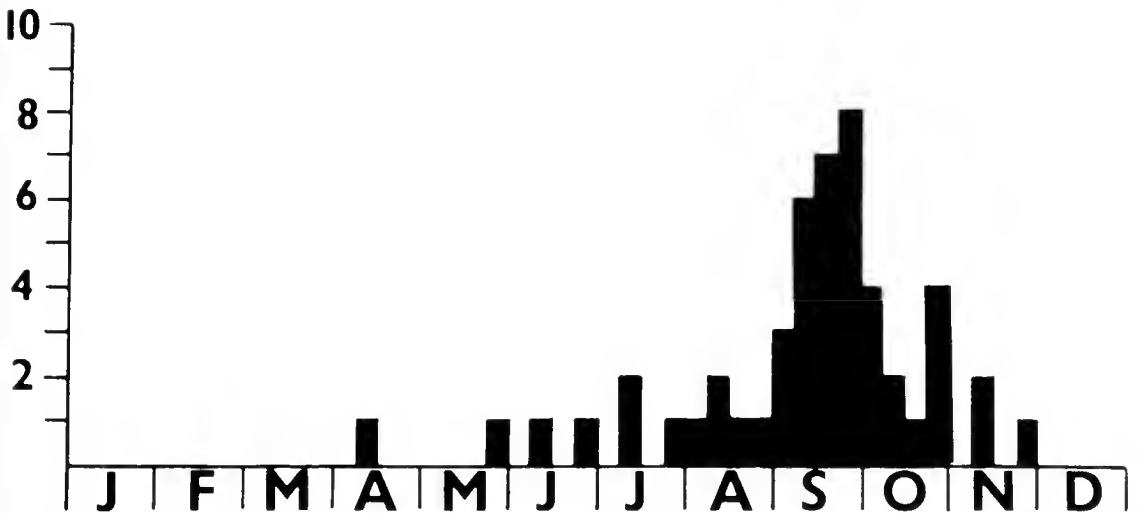


Fig. 5. Pattern of monthly occurrences of Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* in Britain and Ireland, 1958-78

in fig. 4: these were of indeterminate race owing to the views obtained and descriptions given, but most favour *dominica*.

The majority of individuals were found in September (48%) and October (22%) (fig. 5). Most British records were of individuals in juvenile or transitional plumage from juvenile to first-winter, but the majority of Irish ones referred to autumn adults in transitional plumage. The various seasonal plumages have all been recorded.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to those who commented on an earlier draft, particularly Dr N. J. Collar, J. H. Marchant, D. I. M. Wallace and P. J. Grant. Grateful thanks are due to the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, for access to the skin collection, to I. Dawson for many of the papers and literature I requested, to M. J. Rogers and the *British Birds* Rarities Committee for information regarding records in Britain and for making descriptions available, to J. Fitzharris and the Irish Records Panel also for descriptions, and to D. J. Reynolds for assistance with the draft. I should also like to thank the following photographers who provided prints or transparencies which have either been used as illustrations here or were very valuable for reference during the research for this paper: P. R. Allard, D. R. Bishop, M. A. Blick, D. Bowler, D. Constantine, P. Ellis, Professor B. E. Flint, C. H. Greenewalt, D. B. Hunt, J. H. Johns, Gordon Langsbury, B. A. E. Marr, Howard Nicholls, E. G. F. Sauer, Yuri Shibnev, Dr D. Summers-Smith, P. O. Swanberg, Donald and Molly Tounson, Professor Richard Vaughan, P. Vines, Peder Weibull and P. Wheeler.

Summary

The Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* can be distinguished from the Golden Plover *P. apricaria* by known criteria, which are described in detail. The two distinct races, *dominica* and *fulva*, themselves are normally separable by size, proportionate leg length and plumage coloration, the latter particularly in juvenile and winter individuals: a grey-looking Lesser Golden Plover lacking yellow on its underparts in autumn is *dominica*, whose occurrence typifies that of a Nearctic vagrant, being most frequent in September and October in western Britain and Ireland; *fulva* differs noticeably from *dominica* in autumn by its yellowish breast and brighter yellow upperpart markings, and this race currently remains an extreme rarity in Britain and Ireland. The voice of Lesser Golden Plover, normally separable from that of Golden Plover, shows no reliable distinction between the races.

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Mystery photographs

63 Most waders are readily identified by the combination of nine characters: size, shape, leg length, leg colour, bill structure, supercilium, relative position of closed wing tip and tail, axillaries,



and upperpart pattern in flight. Last month's mystery bird does not allow this identi-kit approach, but its plump oval body, tapered rear end, short neck, well scalloped upperparts and streaked underparts clearly belong to a *Calidris* sandpiper. Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* and White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis* have long wings extending well beyond the tail, and all small peeps have clean lower underparts, an obvious supercilium and a more elegant general appearance. Sanderling *C. alba* is well marked above, but has immaculate white lower underparts; and Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima* is obviously dark and quite uniform above and invariably feeds on wave-splashed rocks. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* has beautifully scalloped upperparts and uniform cheeks, but the flanks are unstreaked and it never wades in deep water. Juvenile Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* has more subtly scalloped upperparts, a prominent white supercilium and unmarked flanks. Juvenile Knot *C. canutus* has thin pale fringes to the wing-coverts and scapulars, but the feather centres are mid-grey and a clean white supercilium is always apparent. So, is it a Dunlin *C. alpina*? This common and variable species has numerous races and states of plumage and must always be considered seriously when one is confronted by an odd *Calidris*. It can, however, be eliminated by the dark streaks extending right along the flanks, the almost total absence of a supercilium and the portly appearance. So, have we got a rarity? The pale fringes to the scapulars and wing-coverts really are striking and almost form the long pale lines typical of Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*, but the bird lacks the sharply demarcated breast band and unmarked lower underparts of that species. So, is it a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*? In life, that possibility would be even stronger, our bird having obvious chestnut on crown and foremantle. The adrenalin is really pumping now, with caution about to be thrown to the wind—but hold on! The golden rule of rarity finding is 'check and cross-check', especially when using the process of elimination to identify an extreme rarity. There is more to a Sharp-tailed than a Pectoral Sandpiper with messy underparts, and, on reflection, it too can be excluded by the lack of a striking supercilium and by the underpart markings: summer adults have ventral pointing chevrons on the flanks and winter adults and juveniles have these unmarked.

The flaw in our earlier logic is simple: birds do not always behave

typically. Purple Sandpipers occasionally find themselves in the 'wrong' habitat, as did this juvenile photographed by M. Rains at Cley, Norfolk, in August 1981. The combination of small dark streaks along the flanks to the undertail-coverts, uniform head, and squat portly appearance is actually unique to this species and, while winter adults have uniform dark slaty upperparts, juveniles exhibit prominent pale edges to all upperpart feathers, with some chestnut on crown and foremantle. A final small pointer is the tendency for the closed wings to fall short of the tail. DAVID BRITTON



32. Mystery photograph 64. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Foot-slapping by Coots During 1978, at reservoirs and flooded gravel-pits in Northamptonshire, I began to notice single Coots *Fulica atra* standing on mats of flooded vegetation at the water's edge and slapping the surface with one foot. The Coot would stand hunched and slap regularly and deliberately about five or six times, the noise carrying across land for at least 100m. Although I first noticed this behaviour at the beginning of the breeding season, I have observed it throughout the year. It became obvious that, as it was always triggered by the approach of a human being, it served as a warning to other Coots of possible danger: it can be likened somewhat to foot-stamping by rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. I have not yet determined whether one specific individual of a group of Coots



feeding at the water's edge acts as a guard, or whether it is the Coot nearest to a suitable slapping area that reacts; on one occasion, however, a Coot swam towards an approaching human being, hauled itself out of the water, ran to a weed-patch and began slapping.

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Terrestrial foot-slapping on the nest is mentioned in *BWP* volume 2, although its significance is not known. Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that Mr Richardson's observations appear to add a new dimension to the foot-slapping display by this species, which is also performed by the Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*. EDS

Grey Plovers associating with inland Golden Plover flocks During a study of Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* wintering in Buckinghamshire, we twice observed Grey Plovers *P. squatarola* associating with them. Both sites are at least 90km from the coast. On 15th December 1974, near Marsh Gibbon, RJF saw a single Grey Plover in a permanent pasture field with about 400 Golden Plovers; it fed on the periphery of the flock for several minutes and, when the flock flew to a nearby field, it flew with them. On 19th March 1979, near Bishopstone, CEY watched two Grey Plovers feeding for about 15 minutes in a flock of 103 Golden Plovers on permanent pasture; they maintained particularly close contact with a sub-group of eight Goldens and flew in the middle of the flock.

The two flocks in question had probably arrived in the area very shortly before: the first record came at a time of year when a major influx occurs (*Bird Study* 26: 37-46); the second was shortly after a period of severe weather during which no large flocks of Golden Plovers were recorded in the study area. Alternatively, perhaps the Grey Plovers were passing over and were attracted to a feeding or roosting flock of Golden Plovers.

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Dr Michael W. Pienkowski has commented that mixed Golden Plover-Grey Plover flocks do occur in coastal areas. EDS

Supercilium pattern of immature Pectoral Sandpiper The principal differences between the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and the Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* have been well described by D. J. Britton (*Brit. Birds* 73: 333-345). The distinctions in anterior and posterior supercilium width between the two species were mentioned, but a subsidiary difference was not described: the supercilium of the Pectoral Sandpiper typically forks above the eye, creating a distinctly divided (even striped) pattern when the species is viewed head-on. Although subdued on adults, this pattern is frequently prominent on immatures and is well-illustrated in *Brit. Birds* (68: plate 44) and *Birds of the World* (3: 931).

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D. J. Britton has commented that this is probably a useful character, but that, as in the case of Little Stint *C. minuta* versus Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla*, it may not be diagnostic. EDS

Eye-ring of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper The only Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* that I have seen, on 8th May 1980, in Alaska, had a gleaming white eye-ring. None of the thousands of Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* that I have observed has exhibited this. Photographs in D. J. Britton's paper (*Brit. Birds* 73: 333-345, plates 178-188) depict this eye-ring on Sharp-tailed and its absence on Pectoral. Examining specimens in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, I found that Pectoral Sandpipers have an off-white or buffy eye-ring that does not contrast with the rest of the head colour. Although preparation of study skins sometimes damages the feathering around the eye, obscuring noticeable plumage marks, in life the difference between the gleaming white eye-ring of Sharp-tailed and the dull buff one of Pectoral is marked and startling. While recognising the risks in drawing conclusions from a single observation, further field investigation may confirm the validity of this identification feature.

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D. J. Britton has commented as follows: 'I wish I had noticed this! Summer adult Sharp-tailed clearly exhibits a pronounced clean pale eye-ring, especially in midsummer. It is less striking in winter, but still more pronounced than in Pectoral (e.g. the original print of *Brit. Birds* 73: plate 185). Juveniles also share the feature, but their eyes are surrounded by so much white (cheeks and supercilia) that it is of little note. I cannot, however, agree that Pectoral entirely lacks this character: an eye-ring, less pronounced than Sharp-tailed's, is evident in over half the photographs I have consulted (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 67: plate 51 (juvenile); 68: plate 44 (juvenile); 73: plate 178 (juvenile); 74: plate 176 (adult)). To put it in perspective, I doubt that this character would have produced a speedier identification of the Scilly adult Sharp-tailed (see 73: plates 178-188).' Eds

Apparent play by immature Common Gull On the afternoon of 29th March 1979, at Herriotts Pool, Chew Valley Lake, Avon, I watched an immature Common Gull *Larus canus* indulging in apparent play behaviour. It was carrying a blackish spherical object to a height of about 10m and then allowing it to fall. Usually, the object was caught before it reached the water; if not, the gull alighted to retrieve it, then flew up to repeat the behaviour. This was repeated 20 to 30 times with the same object, and then three other Common Gulls approached. All four then began to toy with an object 10cm long, probably of vegetable origin, in the same way; they appeared to lose interest and alighted on the bank to preen. The sky was heavily overcast with moderately heavy rain. There was no question of food items being involved, although the flight attitude when dropping the object closely resembled that of Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* dropping shellfish on the shore. Searching *British Birds* since 1949 (vol. 42), I found references to similar apparently purposeless behaviour by the following species: Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* (44: 69-70; 46: 378); Common Gull (46: 378); Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* (57: 326-327); Herring Gull (45: 74); and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* (43: 333; 46: 378; 66: 400).

D. WARDEN

Centaur, Ham Lane, Bishop Sutton, Bristol BS18 4TZ

Identification of juvenile Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns There are some potentially confusing statements in the chapter on 'Field identification of juvenile Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns' by P. J. Grant and R. E. Scott in *Frontiers of Bird Identification* (1980, pages 96-100).

The leg colour of juvenile Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* is described as orange, no mention being made of the black-legged first-winter colour. By late August, young Arctic Terns reaching Norfolk already have legs rapidly darkening, almost a sooty-red colour, and often black-looking. In September, most legs look black. The statement that juvenile Roseate Tern *S. dougallii* has black legs unlike the juveniles of the other two species would sway people towards identifying a dark-legged, older juvenile or first-winter plumaged Arctic Tern as a Roseate.

The upperparts of juvenile Arctic Tern are described as 'lacking any strong scaling, being virtually uniform'. In fact, they tend to have a broad-barred appearance, a feature well shown in 'Mystery photograph' 57 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 345). While completely different from the pattern of juvenile Roseate, it does have some similarities to that of the mantle of juvenile Common Tern *S. hirundo*.

J. B. KEMP

1 College Farm, Great Massingham, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Common Tern feeding by wading On 19th May 1979, at Warsash, Hampshire, I watched a Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, from about 30m, as it walked about on the shore at low tide and picked up items which it swallowed. For at least five minutes it behaved in this way, both walking on mud/shingle and wading in a pool about 1cm deep. I could not ascertain the nature of the food it was taking, but there were many very small fishes in the pool and numerous small invertebrates within the total area of about 2m × 2m which it covered. Another Common Tern was standing less than 1m away and 34 others were standing or plunge-diving along the shore. Eventually, both terns by the pool took flight and started fishing with the others in the normal manner. I can find no reference to Common Terns picking food from the ground, nor to their wading at low tide, in Britain.

D. A. CHRISTIE

119 Thornhill Park Road, Thornhill, Southampton SO2 6AT

Field characters of first-year White-winged Black Terns In his interesting note describing a tern with mixed characters of Black *Chlidonias niger* and White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 223-225), Keith Vinicombe mentioned the lack of definitive plumage descriptions for year-old White-winged Blacks. Individuals in first-summer plumage remained in northeast Saudi Arabia from May to August 1980, up to three being present on one lagoon; two more were present in late April 1981. They did not resemble the individual described by KV, supporting the view that that was a juvenile.



Fig. 1. Impressions of immature White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Saudi Arabia, 1980-81. Juvenile, late July to November or December (left), juvenile moulting to first-winter, November to February (centre), and first-summer, late April to August (P. J. Grant, based on sketches by Graham Bundy)

White-winged Black Terns are fairly common autumn migrants in the coastal zones of the Persian Gulf, with juveniles predominating. Most arrive in August and remain until early February. In mid November, some juveniles start their head and body moult to first-winter plumage and begin to look paler, with less contrasting dark 'saddles' and a faded, whitish panel on the coverts of the inner upperwing. These moulting and fading juveniles can often be seen flying with winter-plumaged adults; some retain quite dark areas on the mantle and scapulars throughout the period. From early February through March and in most of April, White-winged Blacks become unaccountably scarce in the region, so that the complete sequence from juvenile to first-winter to first-summer plumage cannot be followed. In late April, there is an influx of adults in summer plumage and a small arrival of first-summers, the latter sometimes remaining until July or August.

The first-summer individuals are like winter-plumaged adults, being essentially pale grey above and white below. They have a variable amount of grey about the head and cheeks; most have a dark patch on the ear-coverts, and some show dark grey on the crown and nape. As on juveniles, the white collar around the hindneck is not always obvious; it is usually best seen when grounded birds anxiously stretch up their necks when approached. They have a variable amount of dark-grey on the primaries; sometimes, this extended in a dark, almost sooty, wedge along the leading edge of the wing, whereas on others, the primaries looked concolorous with

the rest of the wing. The most striking feature on the upperwing is a dark bar on the secondaries, always visible in flight and contrasting with the coverts of the inner upperwing. The rump and tail usually look concolorous with the pale grey upperparts; some examples have slightly darker grey central tail feathers. Two in 1980 showed some blackish 'smudges' on the underwing-coverts, where the adult is strikingly black in summer plumage. Two in late April 1981 had a small dark area at the forward end of the mantle extending to the leading edge of the inner upperwing, but not as far as the carpal joint.

Apparently immature (first- or second-summer) Whiskered Terns *C. hybridus*, resembling adults in summer plumage with sooty caps but with whitish underparts, were present on 5th June and from 18th July 1980. When seen well, the bill of White-winged Black always looks shorter and slighter than the bill of the flatter-crowned Whiskered, the latter often looking 'swollen' at the base. The 'facial expression' of White-winged Black, caused by the head pattern, the higher, more rounded crown, and the neat-looking black bill, is reminiscent of winter-plumaged Little Gull *Larus minutus*.

I am most grateful to Peter Grant and Keith Vinicombe for commenting on the first draft of this note.

GRAHAM BUNDY

PO Box 98, BAC Ltd, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Short-eared Owl apparently feeding on snail At about 14.00 GMT on 13th April 1979, I watched two Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* hunting over rough ground near Pegwell Bay, Kent. Both stooped frequently, without much apparent success, but, when one dropped suddenly on to a stony bank quite near me, I carefully approached to within about 12 m. I could see the owl was feeding on a small object. When I was less than 10 m away, the owl flew off; I marked both the precise spot and the actual food item, which it had dropped from its bill. On examination, I was surprised to discover the broken remains of a snail shell, which must originally have been about 30 mm in diameter; it was not completely shattered, as are those attacked by a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, and the owl had clearly been having difficulty in smashing it. I can find no mention in the literature of snails as a prey of any owl species.

MALCOLM J. PALMER

29 Hurst Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent

Swift impaled on television aerial In July 1973, in Corfu, Greece, while watching a small group of about 15 Swifts *Apus apus* swooping along the narrow streets at rooftop height, I was most surprised when one suddenly flew into one of the many television aerials and impaled itself on the transverse bars. The Swift was fixed through the lower thorax or upper abdomen, the force of the impact having carried it several centimetres along the bar; it flapped its wings for several seconds before dying. Dr David Lack (1956, *Swifts in a Tower*) did not mention any similar causes of mortality.

IAIN H. LEACH

18 Burness Avenue, Alloway, Ayr

Skylarks feeding on bread and household scraps A few days after Ken Osborne informed me of his observations of 30th July 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 98), and at the same spot, I saw a member of the public throwing chopped potato dressed with salad cream over the fence on to the concrete reservoir embankment. After a few minutes, a Skylark *Alauda arvensis* appeared with a juvenile and started to peck off pieces of potato, which it fed to its begging young.

ROYSTON K. COLES

12 Lennard Road, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent

On 16th May 1953, on Canvey Island, Essex, I saw a Skylark on the sea-wall near some houseboats, carrying a piece of bread. When I approached, it ran along the wall with the bread, and finally carried it away in flight. On 17th August 1974, in the picnic area at Grimes Graves, Norfolk, an adult Skylark fed a juvenile with bread crumbs.

R. B. WARREN

103 Larchcroft Road, Ipswich IP1 6PQ

I first observed adult Skylarks (of both sexes) taking bread and cake during June 1970, near the top of Cefn Bryn, Gower, West Glamorgan, a site commonly used as a viewing point by motorists. Several of the larks calmly walked about among parked cars, picking up crumbs in such a tame manner that I concluded that the habit was well established long before.

DAVID G. P. CHATFIELD

3 Cyncoed Close, Dunvant, Swansea SA2 7RS

From 23rd June to 7th July 1951, at Crosby, Liverpool, up to three Skylarks fed in my garden, a piece of waste ground on the edge of the town next to open country. They frequently ate and took away, presumably to nestlings, bread and cheese scraps; one was once seen to eat a maggot chrysalis and a piece of fried black pudding. On 4th January 1961, following a period of heavy frost and snow, a Skylark ate bread crumbs in the same garden, now cultivated. During a cold spell in December 1962, when the ground was covered with frozen snow, up to five Skylarks fed in a new uncultivated garden at Formby, Merseyside; on 30th, they repeatedly fed on bread crumbs and were seen pecking at lumps of bread. They visited the garden many times until 10th March 1963 and were often seen pecking at, and sometimes eating, bread crumbs.

D. J. LOW

25 Heatherways, Freshfield, Liverpool L37 7HL

In my book *Birds of Town and Suburb* (1975), I listed 23 species, including Skylark, which I observed eating bread in the outer suburbs of London. The Skylark observations include one present daily in my garden at Dollis Hill during 5th-9th January 1963 which fed on bread throughout the period.

ERIC SIMMS

21 Church Street, South Witham, Grantham, Lincolnshire

The Skylark's relatively catholic tastes in food and occasional exceptional tameness now seem sufficiently documented; further observations will be filed for reference but not published separately. *Ens*

Identification of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler I read with interest Alan Kitson's comments on Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 398-399, plates 203-204). In June 1980, also in Mongolia, I saw and photographed (plate 52) Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers, apparently of the race *rubescens* (*Ibis* 13: 301-332), to which K. Williamson (1968, *Identification for Ringers 1. The Genera Cettia, Locustella, Acrocephalus and Hippolais, BTO Field Guide No. 7*) suggested the British and Irish vagrants belong. They were all adults in spring plumage, sometimes in atypically exposed situations, and were readily identifiable, the rufous rump and uppertail and the very pale grey, almost white, tips to the upperside of the tail being quite obvious. A number of other features combine to make the spring adult a much more strikingly plumaged bird than the literature, and especially illustrations, suggest. In shape and manner, the warblers were clearly of the genus *Locustella*; particularly characteristic was the rodent-like habit of running along the ground. The cold, greyish buff ground colour of the plumage, however, lacked the olive element of Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia*. By far the most outstanding feature was the supercilium (so obvious in Kitson's photographs). My own impression of its shape and extent agrees entirely with Kitson's, but I would describe it as white rather than buffy white and as conspicuous as that of Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. I also agree with Kitson that this feature effectively rules out confusion between Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and other members of its genus, and would suggest that confusion is possible only with two other species: Sedge Warbler and Moustached Warbler *A. melanopogon*. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, however, lacks the conspicuous rusty colour so characteristic of the upperparts of Moustached and, especially, the sooty black crown and very dark lores and ear-coverts of that species. I considered the following to be significant plumage characters of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler:

- | | |
|---|---|
| HEAD Besides supercilium (see above), crown darker and more heavily streaked than on Sedge, especially around side and at back, with paler, apparently unstreaked forehead. | Ear-coverts and lores at least as dark as on Sedge, not obviously streaked in distant view. |
| LOWER NAPE Lower nape and upper back | |

52. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Mongolia, June 1980 (M. Densley)



area very pale, seemingly unmarked greyish-buff, creating a well marked 'shawl', contrasting well with both darker mantle and head, giving definite capped appearance. (Similar unmarked pale area sometimes present on Sedge Warbler, but contrast between it and mantle and head does not appear as great.)

WING-COVERTS Contrast between some of wing-coverts and rest of the generally medium grey-brown wing very striking. Primary coverts appear virtually black in the field, creating a conspicuous black spot on the wing, especially in flight. Greater coverts also appear virtually black, but with practically white fringes, creating striking

line of scales or chequers across wing (with much the same effect as dark-centred, pale-edged median coverts of Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*); this feature may also extend to some of the median coverts, as it certainly does to inner secondaries and tertials. Strikingly pale, almost white, outer fringe to second and probably third primary feathers.

UNDERPARTS Chin, throat and upper breast areas striking white, forming very noticeable gorget or 'apron'. Similar white area under tail, forming triangular-shaped patch. Rest of underparts pale, seemingly unmarked greyish-buff, much the same colour as shawl. Contrast between white and darker areas very marked.

The literature seems not to draw attention to any of the wing features, but the last two points noted show well in Kitson's photographs. A number of observers and reference works have commented on elements of the underparts, but none, to my mind, has placed the required degree of emphasis, nor correctly defined the areas.

M. DENSLEY

60 Saffron Crescent, Tickhill, Doncaster

Bullfinches eating flesh During severe weather in January and February 1979, at my former home at Hartest, Suffolk, a number of birds visited the open-fronted glass verandah in which I provided them daily with food: household scraps, broken corn and weed seeds scattered on the floor, and a number of cooked chicken and duck carcasses and other bones suspended from the roof. A pair of Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* fed regularly on the seeds but, on 25th January, I saw the female clinging to one of the carcasses and eating the flesh with evident relish for some 20 minutes. She did so again the next day, while the male picked up and ate fragments of meat that fell to the ground. Both Bullfinches fed in this way from time to time during the next week or two. On 10th February I hung up a large ham bone. Within a short time the female Bullfinch was clinging to it and eating some of the meat; she repeated this behaviour a few days later. I can find no reference in the literature to Bullfinches eating flesh, apart from insects.

WILLIAM H. PAYN

Neptunia, Champs Beulai, Alderney, Channel Islands

Letters

Bird topography and the numbering of primaries Many of the 'specialised structural or plumage features of certain species or families' which you have decided (*Brit. Birds* 74: 239) not to include in your charts of bird topography (74: 240-241) are excellently illustrated in the section

(2.19) on 'Bird Topography' in J. E. Pemberton (1980, *Birdwatcher's Year-book 1981*). Reference to these charts—which could, I think, have usefully been made by you—brings me to the main subject of this correspondence: the numbering of primaries. *BYB* numbers primaries from the carpal joint outwards (descendently). This conforms with the practice adopted by *BWP* (1: 34). In contrast, *British Birds* (or its contributors) seem to number primaries ascendantly. Standardisation of this feature seems to me at least as desirable as standardisation of those potentially confusing aspects of bird topography (e.g. head-stripes, wing-coverts) dealt with by you (74: 239-242).

I urge you to use descendent numbering of primaries in future in your journal, for the sake of standardisation. On this important point, may I remind you of K. Williamson (1968, *Identification for Ringers* 1: 7)? Either way, I feel *British Birds* should state whether primaries are to be numbered ascendantly or descendently in contributions to it.

MICHAEL J. EARP
63 Ivinghoe Road, Bushey Heath, Hertfordshire WD2 3SH

There is a valid case in favour of both methods of primary numbering. The main points in favour of ascendant (inwards) numbering are that it is already so firmly entrenched as the most convenient method of describing wing-formulae in almost all in-the-hand identification literature that it would be unwise and confusing to recommend change; and, for field identification literature and field description purposes, it is a more simple rule to refer always to the outermost large (non-vestigial) primary as the 1st (use of descendent numbering would demand prior knowledge as to whether the species is one with nine, ten or eleven large primaries before it could be decided whether the outer primary is the 9th, 10th or 11th). The case in favour of descendent (outwards) numbering mainly embraces the fact that, in all but a few species, the moult and replacement of the primaries takes place in an orderly sequence outwards from the centre of the wing, and it is logical that the numbering of the primaries should follow this sequence. Thus, this method is usually used in the literature on moult, in recording the state of moult of an individual bird, and in standardised detailed structure descriptions which do not necessarily involve important identification characters (as in *BWP*). In our view, the imposition of one or other method as standard would be pointless, as it would be unlikely to gain universal acceptance. Indeed, we believe there is merit in retaining both methods, one or the other to be used as appropriate to the subject. EDS

Team twitching I am fascinated, and appalled, by the emergence of the concept of team twitching (*Brit. Birds* 74: 358). What are the rules, and who sets them? Does every member of a team have to see each bird (or at least delude himself that he has), or is it enough for one member of a team to see a species? If one member alone is enough, how far apart can members of the same team be? Can they be on opposite sides of the same field? The same wood? Can one be in the Scillies, another on Fair Isle? How many members can a team have? If I nominate a team of eight, with members in England, the Camargue, Kenya, Nepal, Siberia, California, Brazil, and New Zealand, shall I be able to claim a new record of, say, 700 species in one day? (Come to that, must the day begin and end at the same absolute time for all team members?) Clearly, the whole thing is ridiculous, and you do birdwatching a disservice by giving publicity to such artificial achievements. (To justify it as 'fun' is valid only as long as restraint and self-discipline are in evidence—concepts that many of your readers will feel

have long since vanished from the twitching scene.) How long before we have 'Twitch of the Day' on BBC1 on Saturday nights? STEPHEN HARVEY
18 Peverells Road, Chandler's Ford, Hampshire SO5 2AT

Record birdwatches Isn't it about time *British Birds* ceased providing space (and prestige) to the nonsensical pastime of twitching/birding/listing or whatever you call it, but what is in essence simply the crude pursuit of birds for the purposes of one-upmanship? Who wants to know, for heaven's sake, what so-and-so's personal 'score' is? Who honestly cares how many species it is possible to see in one day? Does it really matter to anyone with a genuine concern for ornithology that so-and-so had a trial run with so-and-so to see if together they couldn't 'score' more than X number of species before breakfast? Does all this chasing about the countryside advance one iota the frontiers of our collective understanding of birds? Of course it doesn't.

Indeed, if the recent River-Warbler-in-Norfolk affair is anything to go by, I should imagine the whole business of twitching, etc., etc. to be positively counter-productive so far as the general well-being and conservation of birdlife are concerned. The undignified spectacle of adult human beings struggling with each other for a mere glimpse of this rare bird would have been quite amusing if the effects were not so awful. The destruction of crops and the damage done to farm property was probably quite enough to put off for ever any conservation minded farmer who might have been considering turning over some spare corner of his acreage to undisturbed vegetation for the encouragement of wildlife. If this is the way 'birdwatchers' (the general public isn't given to drawing nice distinctions between ornithologists and twitchers, but lump them all together under this generic term) are seen to behave, and if I were a farmer, I know that the last thing I would want on my farm would be any surplus natural cover that might tempt a rare bird to pay me a visit!

If these people wish to go scurrying about the land accumulating 'ticks' for their 'lists', one obviously cannot prevent them, but *British Birds* really shouldn't be seen to be giving any attention at all to a group of individuals whose antics are beginning to cause widespread offence and give the name 'birdwatcher' a bad smell.

JAMES WILDE

35 Wilton Court, Wilton Street, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3JR

We regard twitching as a perfectly acceptable form of entertainment, provided that no disturbance or harm comes to bird, habitat or human beings; it is non-productive, but so is the watching of tennis at Wimbledon. Birdwatchers are, in our view, entitled to gain their pleasure from birds by merely watching them, by listing them or by studying them. *British Birds* is aimed largely at those who study birds, but we do recognise other interests and do devote some of our space to items which will interest or amuse those who take their birds somewhat less seriously.

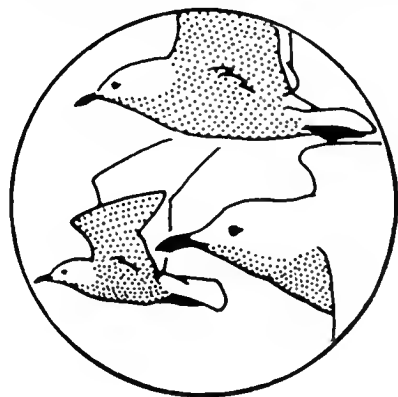
We do not condone the occasional instances of disgraceful behaviour at the sites of rare birds (as our forthcoming Editorial on this subject will make clear), but twitching—travelling long distances to see rare birds found by other people—and listing—the recording and counting of the numbers of species seen at defined localities or in defined time periods—are both, in our opinion, legitimate and harmless forms of entertainment. On occasions, listing can be positively beneficial, as in the case of sponsored birdwatches (for example, over £3,000 was raised for wildlife charities by the two rival teams from *Country Life* and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, as we reported in 'News and comment', *Brit. Birds* 71: 358). Eds

Fifty years ago . . .

'THE BREEDING-HABITS OF THE CORN-BUNTING (AS OBSERVED IN SUSSEX), WITH SOME NOTES ON ITS SONG, CRIES AND GENERAL DEPORTMENT. I have on divers occasions watched a male amorously pursuing several females *serialim*, and actually tread two in succession. These females have forthwith returned to nests, all of which have been at least tolerably close together. Here again, though, that demon called 'doubt' creeps in. For the male is of a peculiarly erotic temperament, and would doubtless pay court to the wife of any of his fellows temporarily absent, and of course it cannot be said *quite definitely* that cocks belonging to the (extra) covered females in point were not in being somewhere. Even as the matter stands it is interesting, but a great deal of further investigation is required before it can fearlessly be asserted that this species is sometimes polygamous . . . When really courting the male . . . is a most ardent wooer. Consequently, he loses no chance of pestering the female with amorous attentions. Even when she is off incubated eggs, he will not always leave her alone, though in some cases it is obvious that he merely wishes to drive her back to duty. At such times she often does her best to avoid his onslaught, being then for so 'heavy' a species distinctly quick and resourceful of movement. She will, for instance, just when the male is up with her, suddenly fall flat to the ground. The pursuer, of course, then shoots along over her, thwarted for the nonce at any rate. The male is also persistent at chasing off intruding and perhaps intending Lotharios.' JOHN WAIPOLE-BOND. (*Brit. Birds* 25: 292-300, March 1932)

Announcements

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER



'Gulls: a guide to identification' The series 'Field identification of west Palearctic gulls' by P. J. Grant is being published as a book by T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd. As the material originally appeared in *British Birds*, the publishers have agreed that subscribers should have the opportunity to purchase this book at a special prepublication price available only to *BB* readers.

The new book will have a revised text of approximately 150 pages plus a 128-page section of over 370 photographs, including many new ones obtained since the *BB* papers. The price on publication in June 1982 will be £12.00, but you can order a copy now for £10.60 (post free in UK and Eire; add 50p for rest of world). Orders must reach *BB* before 4th June 1982 to qualify for the prepublication price. Copies of the book will be despatched on or before publication day.

Send your order, your name and address and your cheque or postal order for £10.60 per copy (payable to British Birds Ltd) to: Gulls Special Offer, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Christmas puzzles The winner of the competition on page vii of the December 1981 issue was Ian G. Jackson of Ballynahinch, Co. Down, whose name was drawn from the 77 correct entries received.

The answers to the two puzzles were: (1) Buzzard, and (2) Top shelf on the bookcase in a vase (composed of the appropriate letters from Stonechat, Scops Owl, Shelduck, Bullfinch, Long-tailed Skua, Bluethroat, Little Grebe, Woodcock, Blackcap, Pheasant, Eider, Barnacle Goose, Olivaceous Warbler and Serin).

Requests

Photographs of rarities and recent occurrences

We are always very glad to be able to publish photographs of rare birds seen in Britain and Ireland, either in the annual 'Report on rare birds' or in 'Recent reports'; to be included in the latter feature, we need black-and-white prints, which must be available at the editorial office by the 8th of the month following the occurrence. Although high-quality conversion to black-and-white from colour transparencies is expensive, we are prepared to undertake this



53 & 54. Juvenile Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* and first-year Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Scilly, October 1980 (Roger Tidman).



for a selection of the best and most interesting of the year's photographs of rarities; with an appropriate original, results from colour transparencies can (as shown by Roger Tidman's two photographs included here, plates 53 & 54) often approach those from black-and-white originals. Even colour prints can sometimes be used, so we do welcome submission of these. Colour transparencies must be originals (which will be returned after use). Prints are especially welcomed, however, since they are so useful for our reference files as well as for possible use in the journal. As well as major rarities, we also welcome photographs of other species which may be 'in the news' (e.g. Waxwings or Little Stints during an invasion, a wintering Blackcap, a passing Sooty Shearwater). Good photographs of 'difficult' species are also very useful, for use as 'Mystery photographs' both in the journal and in our competitions at conferences.

We thank the many photographers who have helped us in the past, and appeal for an increasing flow of suitable photographs. While duplicate transparencies and extra prints of rarities should be supplied with records for circulation to the Rarities Committee (send to M. J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP), please send all original transparencies and prints for use in the journal to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Girl Bunting survey All records of Girl Buntings *Emberiza cirrus* in Britain during March to September 1982 are required for a complete census of this decreasing species (see pages 105-108) being organised by H. P. Sitters for the BTO. Special 'survey cards' are also available. If you are not already in touch with your regional organiser, please write to H. P. Sitters, Whistley House, Axtown Lane, Yelverton, Plymouth, Devon PL20 6BU.

News and comment

Bob Spencer and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Poland The Poles are one of the important ornithological nations in Europe, with a fine record of international co-operation. Their imaginative 'Operation Baltic' seeks to track the NE-SW passage of passerine migrants through the Baltic basin and has the co-operation of several neighbouring Baltic states. The specialist journal *The Ring* was founded by a Pole—the late Professor Rydzewski—and is still published from Poland. In the organisational field, Poland provides one of the joint secretaries of the International Bird Census Committee and a vice president of Euring—the European Union for Bird Ringing. We hope that our many colleagues in Poland are safe and well, and trust that the lines of communication will soon be re-opened.

Bahrain. During his seven-year stay in the country, he founded the Bahrain Natural History Society and edited the publication *Wildlife in Bahrain*. He was an active birdwatcher and ringer, contributing enormously to the knowledge of the island's avifauna. Several years ago, he embarked upon a ringing programme involving the White-cheeked Tern, and, more recently, the Sooty Falcons breeding in the Bahrain archipelago. It was his intention to return to the United Kingdom in August 1982 with his wife Barbara and son Peter, to live in their house on Holy Island, Northumberland. Trevor will be sorely missed by all those who knew him, and the Middle East ornithological world is poorer for his absence. (Contributed by Dr Mike Hill and Tom Nightingale, Bahrain NHS)

Trevor J. Hallam Many will be saddened by the news of Trevor Hallam's tragic death on Christmas Day 1981. Trevor was killed by a motor vehicle whilst out running in

Jim Hall As nearly 80% of the land surface of Great Britain is devoted to agriculture, what happens on farmland must have a profound effect on the well-being of our bird

populations, and hence be of vital concern to all birdwatchers. One man for whom that concern has become a way of life is Jim Hall, first full-time adviser to the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. When Jim retired recently—and it is only a partial retirement in that he is continuing on a part-time basis—he was able to look back over a decade in which, largely thanks to his unflagging enthusiasm and leadership, the FWAG had become firmly rooted throughout the country. At an informal ceremony, Jim's colleagues on FWAG presented him with a Lapwing modelled in silver, the plaque on which reads: 'To Jim Hall, in recognition of his untiring efforts to reconcile modern farming with the conservation of wildlife and landscape.' Well done, Jim!

Cold weather shooting ban A press release from the Department of the Environment dated 6th February 1980 announced that the government had accepted new guidelines for the introduction of bans on the shooting of wildfowl during severe weather. The guidelines referred to were the work of an *ad hoc* working party consisting of both shooting and conservation interests, and the objective system devised depended on the ground condition (frost or snow) at 13 selected estuaries on 14 consecutive mornings.

This winter provided the first test of the system and, as a *Guardian* writer put it, 'The Environment Secretary, Mr Michael Heseltine, risked the disfavour of some of the Conservative Party's traditional supporters by banning the shooting of all wildfowl for the next fortnight.' We understand that pressure from MPs sympathetic to the British Field Sports Society caused Mr Heseltine to defer action briefly, but that the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (formerly WAGBI) lived up to its new title by urging the introduction of the ban.

The ironic thing is that, when the ban expired on 5th January, Scotland was experiencing conditions even more severe than when the ban was introduced. A Scottish ban was, however, reintroduced at midnight on 10th January, and, following seven days of severe weather in England and Wales, a ban came back into force there too at midnight on 12th.

Dead wild birds Ian Galbraith, head of the Sub-department of Ornithology at the Natural History Museum, is appealing for help. He writes: 'The national research collections need more specimens of nearly

every species, especially for the preparation of skeletons and specimens for dissection. Birds picked up dead on roads and elsewhere are suitable unless badly damaged, even if they are not very fresh. Further information and advice can be obtained from the Sub-department of Ornithology, British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP; telephone 044 282 4181.

New reserves in Italy *Habitat* reports that another 20,000 ha have been added to the 29,000 ha of wetlands in the province of Emilio-Romagna already designated as being of international significance. The 49,000 ha represent one-quarter of all Italy's wetlands. Protected under the terms of the Ramsar Convention, between 50,000 and 100,000 birds have been counted there in winter.

Bird-catching in Belgium Contrary to the provisions of the Bern Convention and of the Brussels Directive, authorisation was given last autumn for the capture of 60,000 birds to supply the needs of bird breeders and song-bird enthusiasts in the Walloon and Flemish regions. This may be a fraction of the toll which used to be taken in former years, but it is still very disappointing that the regulations can be breached on so large a scale.

Hope for Mauritius Kestrel The American expert, Stanley Temple, writing in *Endangered Birds*, describes how at one time the population of the Mauritius Kestrel *Falco punctatus* was reduced to six individuals, of which two were in captivity. The Mauritius Kestrel is a cavity-nesting species, occupying holes in either trees or caves, or crevices in cliffs. Cliff-nesting individuals can be distinguished by the worn state of their tails, even after death, and an examination of museum skins indicates that, during this century, there has been a behavioural shift towards tree nesting. Unfortunately, the tree-nesting habit is 'unadaptive', placing the breeding birds at the mercy of the introduced macaques *Macaca irus*, which are extremely efficient at locating the nests and destroying the eggs. In 1974, one pair of the kestrels nested on a basalt cliff and raised three young. This was probably the first successful nesting for several years. Two of the young subsequently paired, and, being imprinted on cliffs, nested successfully on another cliff, while the adults continued to occupy their new, secure site. At the time of Temple's report, the wild population had

risen from four to 12. Thus, although the numbers are still frighteningly low, there are good grounds for optimism.

Swans and anglers An important report has recently been published by the Nature Conservancy Council entitled *Lead Poisoning in Swans*. The report, based on an 18-month investigation, reveals that lead poisoning caused the deaths of 39.2% of the corpses examined and suggests that probably between 2,700 and 3,500 swans die each year in England alone as a result of swallowing fishing weights. Fortunately, the problem is not severe in Scotland.

The report urges that the use of lead weights should be voluntarily phased out by anglers over the next five years, and calls for the establishment of fishing-free zones in certain problem areas, notably on the Avon at Stratford and on the Thames around Reading.

The executive director of the National Anglers' Council was a member of the working party which conducted the study, so there is hope for the future. He said, however, that anglers would continue to use lead weights until a satisfactory alternative can be found. The report, which costs £1.50 plus 75p

p&p, can be obtained from the NCC Interpretive Branch, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY4 4TW.

Mistaken identity A distinguished northern ornithologist was asked by the police to identify a collection of eggs which, it was suspected, had been stolen. Among the collection were a number which the ornithologist had no hesitation in identifying as Peregrine eggs. The police took the collection away, but later telephoned to say that they were not Peregrine eggs. Not unnaturally, for he is a field man, our hero defended the correctness of his identification. Nevertheless, when the police subsequently brought the eggs back for further examination, he had to acknowledge his mistake. They were skillfully painted forgeries! As he wryly remarked, it is not a crime to be found in possession of forged eggs.

Young Ornithologists of the Year The presentation of the awards to the 1981 winners (see page 41) was made at the RSPB headquarters at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, on 18th December 1981 (plate 55). This annual competition will again be run by the YOC and sponsored by *British Birds* in 1982.

55. Young Ornithologists of the Year in the grounds of The Lodge after presentation of their awards: left to right, Janet Bower (senior winner), Matthew Tostevin (intermediate winner), JTRS, Miranda Wade (junior winner) and Peter Holden (YOC National Organiser); December 1981 (Neill Burrow Photography)



Cleaning our rivers A report on this subject is not so encouraging. In a publication entitled *River Quality: the 1980 Survey and Future Outlook*, the authors indicate that the high investment of the early 1970s, which made possible such dramatic improvements in certain well-known black-spots, is no longer possible in times of financial stringency. Today, 'there is no prospect of resources available for investment being shifted to this area from the priority tasks of maintaining existing water supply and sewerage systems.' You get what you can pay for, and it seems that some years may pass before another river can be 'transformed'. The report is available, price £5.30 inclusive of p&p, from the National Water Council, 1 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9B1

Hertfordshire atlas The long-awaited *The Hertfordshire Breeding Bird Atlas*, compiled by Chris Mead and Ken Smith, with illustrations by Kevin Baker, is due to be published on 31st May 1982. Anyone with an interest in atlas projects, as well as all Hertfordshire birdwatchers, will obviously wish to own a copy. There is a special pre-publication offer of £3.50 + 50p p&p (full price will be £5.00 + 50p); send your name, address and a cheque (payable to HBBA), to arrive before 31st March 1982 for reduced rate, to Hertfordshire Bird Atlas, c/o 4 Beaconsfield Road, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 4DP.

New public image? Observed recently when engaged in winter atlas fieldwork, Barry Nightingale and I were asked the intended-to-be-knowledgeable-and-rhetorical question 'You two twitters are you?' Momentarily nonplussed, our hesitation was taken as a denial, whereupon we were accused, 'You *are* ornithologists, aren't you?' This we could acknowledge. But has a new term now been coined? 'Anyone for twitting?' (JTRS)

New head of Biological Records Centre

The BRC, based at Monks Wood Experimental Station near Huntingdon, collects and stores distributional data on all groups of Britain's animals and plants and periodically produces the dot-distribution atlases to which many of us first of all contribute and then later refer. Dr Franklyn Perring, co-editor of *Flora of the British Isles* (1962), who is now General Secretary of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, was succeeded as head of the BRC by John Heath, editor of the mammoth 11-volume work *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (1976-), of which volumes 1 and 9 have been published so far. Although continuing with this 'lepidopterists' BWP', John Heath has now (as from 31st January) retired and his successor as head of the BRC is Paul T. Harding, a name familiar to all students of woodlice.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

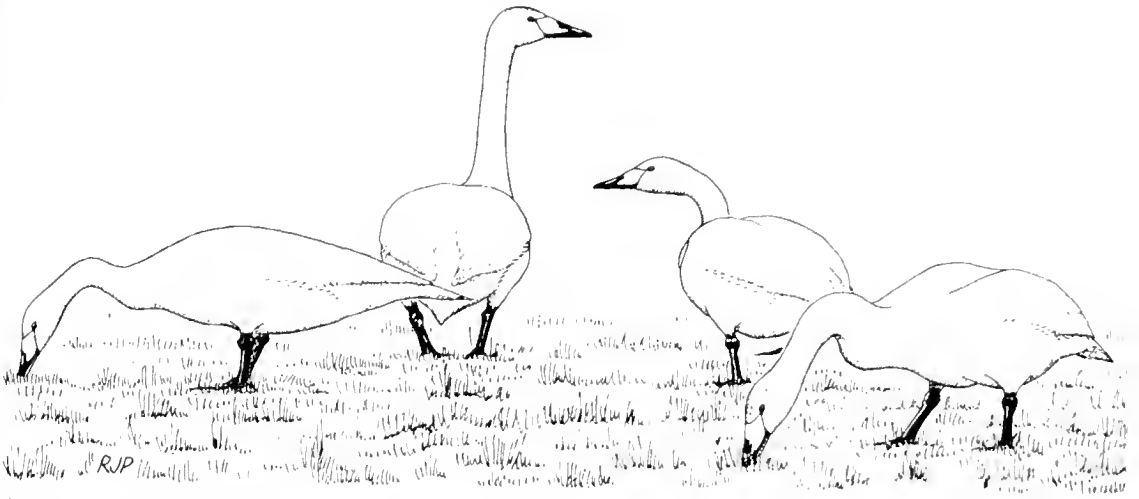
**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**

Dates in this report refer to December unless otherwise stated.

At the beginning of the month, although the winds were from the north, the air originated from a warm anticyclone in the Atlantic and temperatures remained near normal. On 8th, the pattern changed, the Atlantic high declined and the Greenland high became the source of the air covering Britain and Ireland, and temperatures dropped to



below zero. The depressions then tracked across the south of Britain bringing periods of heavy snowfall and, on one clear night, temperatures of -25°C were recorded. The



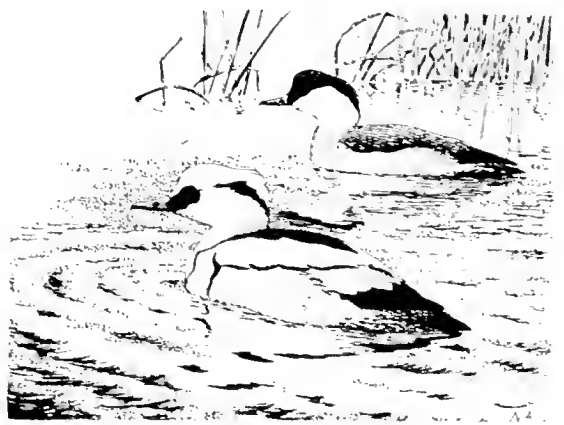
frontal systems dividing the warm air-mass to the south from the northerly air remained slow-moving for the rest of the month, giving dull, loggy weather, which prevented further very low temperatures. Warmer westerlies reached southern England, but the very cold easterlies predominated to the north of the fronts.

Divers and wildfowl

Unexpected, yet in the traditional northeast, was a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* near Holy Island (Northumberland) on 25th and 26th November. **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* were perhaps more scattered than usual, being less concentrated on their major sites, some of which were severely iced-up: 150 at Walland Marsh (Kent) was indicative of this dispersal. **Whooper Swans** *C. cygnus* were in good numbers early on, with, for instance, 400 at Meikle Loch and 187 on the Ythan (Grampian), and the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) attracted big numbers too. Geese also appeared in many places, especially, perhaps, as the freeze-up affected the Netherlands, although many from there seemed to have gone south into France. Nevertheless, southeast England had several groups of **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis*, including 60 in southeast Suffolk on 28th, 27 near Havergate Island (Suffolk) and smaller numbers at Elmley, Stodmarsh, Dungeness and Walland Marsh (all Kent), and on the Ouse Washes. Others reached Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), York (North Yorkshire) and northeast Grampian. Walney Island (Cumbria) largely escaped the snow and provided a refuge for up to 908 **Pink-footed Geese** *A. brachyrhynchus*. Slimbridge also had up to three **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *A. erythropus* and a **Snow Goose** *A. caerulescens*; the latter species also turned up in Grampian and near Stirling (Central).

Neartic wildfowl were represented by

another **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*, at Lightshaw Flash (Greater Manchester) on 22nd November, and a **Teal** *A. crecca* of the race *carolinensis* at Cley (Norfolk), but there was no influx of **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* this year. A **Ferruginous Duck** *A. nyroca* appeared at York from 29th November and another was at Alton Water (Suffolk) from 10th to 15th. A **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* was reported from Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 21st November, but last year's hybrid with Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis*, which was later seen at Blagdon (Avon), should be borne in mind. **Smews** *Mergus albellus* were also frozen out of the Netherlands, but the numbers in Britain as a consequence were generally not large, though odd ones were widespread and there were up to 28 in the Dungeness district and eight at Benacre (Suffolk) on 19th. The Walney/Foulney area of Cumbria generally has about 3,000 **Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* in winter, but from 20th to 31st numbers reached 6,000 there. In east Grampian, two **King Eiders** *S. spectabilis* were reported, along with a **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri*.



Waterside birds

The superb **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* stayed at Magor (Gwent) into the New Year and another was found at Kil-



Stephen Abbott.

macolm (Strathelyde). **Bitterns** *B. stellaris* must have been affected by the weather: there were three at Dungeness and odd ones elsewhere, for example Eaton Socon (Cambridgeshire), over the Christmas period. The two **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* remained at Stodmarsh and a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* was at Wadebridge (Cornwall) in November. Waders included an unseasonal **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* at Dawlish (Devon) late in November and an excellent winter count of 100 **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* on Havergate Island on 31st. Three **Cranes** *Grus grus* were reported from Slimbridge in mid month, and, even more exciting, perhaps, were three **Great Bustards** *Otis tarda* at Walland Marsh from 20th to 30th and another at Northward Hill (Kent) up to 29th. Gulls included the expected batch of **Glaucous Gulls** *Larus hyperboreus*, with up to 25 on the east Grampian coast, and **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* reached four at Girdleness and five at Fraserburgh (Grampian), with individuals elsewhere, including North Shields (Tyne & Wear), Cannock (Staffordshire), Hythe (Kent) and one on Christmas Day at Adswold (Greater Manchester). **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were noted on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) for much of the late autumn period and at Radipole (Dorset) and Chew Valley Lake (Avon) during the month. Much scarcer these days is the **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla*: a first-winter appeared at Slimbridge and stayed into January. Bird of the month for a few must undoubtedly have been a **Ross's Gull**

Rhodostethia rosea which passed Minsmere (Suffolk) on 13th. A touch of contrast is provided by an out-of-season **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* which was watched at Thurlestone (Devon) on 5th.

Birds of prey

A **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* was found in Dyfed in mid November. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were scarce, but singles were at Elmley (Kent) and Combe (Berkshire). Two **Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* were in southeast Suffolk on 13th and a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* passed Warehorne (Kent) on 1st January. **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* were prominent along the northeast English coast and in northeast Scotland with as many as 25 at Loch of Strathbeg (Grampian).

Passerines and near-passerines

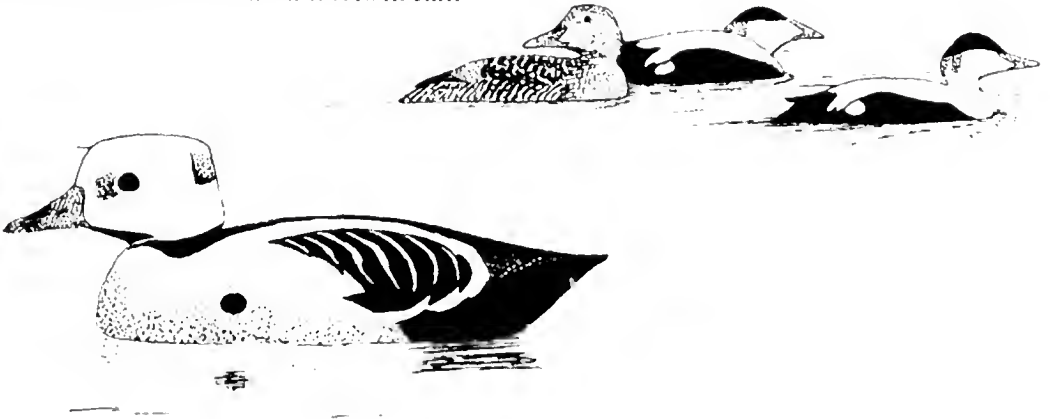
A **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* at Foxhall (Suffolk) on 2nd must have suddenly found itself in most unsuitable temperatures; a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* stayed at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) until the same date and a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* was at Felixstowe (Suffolk) until 8th. A **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* was reported from Norfolk in mid November, when a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* was picked up by a man walking his dog near Doncaster (South Yorkshire). Two **Black-throated Thrushes** *Turdus ruficollis* were reported: from Aberdeen (Grampian) and Shetland. **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* seem to have been commoner than last year, though not in some areas, such as Kent. **Waxwings** *Bombicilla garrulus* appeared in fair numbers in northeast England and east Scotland, with 30 in Aberdeen; except for 12 in Chelmsford (Essex), totals were lower farther south. The two **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* at Blacktoft Sands (Humberside) stayed all month, and **Bearded Tits** *Panurus biarmicus* included 15 at Workington (Cumbria), only the second record for the county in 200 years!



Latest news

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* at Leiston (Suffolk) up to 30th January not relocated early February. **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyae* (dead) at North Shields; **Ring-billed Gulls**: Shetland, Hayle Estuary and Radipole Lake, with two at Slimbridge, where **Lesser White-fronted Geese** remained. Five **Snow Geese**: Elmley; **Pink-footed Geese**: record numbers in Lan-

cashire; **Wigeons** *Anas penelope*: 10,000 on West Sedgemoor (Somerset) and other southwestern localities; **Smews**: 40 in Dungeness area. Movements of **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* and **Redwings** *T. iliacus* in southwest of huge proportions. **Cranes** again present in East Anglia.



Reviews

Atlas Ornitológico de la Rioja. By Eduardo de Juana Aranzana. Servicio de Cultura de la Exema, Diputacion Provincial, Logrono, 1980. 661 pages; 148 maps; some line-drawings. No price quoted.

Although this atlas of breeding birds covers only a tiny portion of Spain (176 squares with an area totalling 22,000 km²), it deserves to be noted very widely, especially in any countries where there may currently be pessimism concerning the completion of atlas projects because of the small number of observers.

The fieldwork for this atlas was carried out entirely by the author, and this 38-mm (1½-inch) thick book is the result. It is a magnificent one-man effort. What will be of especial interest to potential atlas organisers in other countries will be the statistic concerning the speed of discovery of species in Spanish squares. It may be recalled that 'in typical lowland [English] squares an observer practised in the techniques of quick coverage can find 50 per cent of the breeding species in just over two hours, 75 per cent in less than ten hours and 87 per cent in 16 hours, but the results from one square suggest that at least 200 hours are required to reach 94 per cent' (*Bird Study* 20: 88-90). In the far more difficult Spanish terrain, it was assessed that 70% of the expected species were found in an average of 12 hours of fieldwork. This puts successful breeding bird atlas projects within reach even of those countries with the smallest numbers of active observers. It has most important implications for the forthcoming Europe-wide breeding bird atlas project during 1985-88.

The text is wholly in Spanish, but the maps are, of course, self-explanatory.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Instinctive Navigation of Birds. By E. C. Gerrard. The Scottish Research Group, Skye, 1981. 185 pages; several maps and figures. £4.50.

This is a disturbing book, in which the author examines and discredits past experiments on avian navigation. He claims that the well-known hypotheses on celestial orientation were based on poorly conducted experiments, and that migrants probably navigate visually by

showing degrees of phototactic movement. The direction of migration is influenced by any instinctively attractive object, such as the sun, stars, cloud elements and topographical features. Since phototactic movements are commonly exhibited by insects and other organisms, the author maintains that there is no reason to suppose that birds use anything more sophisticated.

The book is rather poorly written and difficult to follow in places. The ideas are nevertheless of interest, but, although the book can be recommended to ornithologists concerned with this subject, its complex theorising may deter the more general reader. NORMAN ELKINS

Introduced Birds of the World: the worldwide history, distribution and influence of birds introduced to new environments. By John L. Long. Illustrated by Susan Tingay. David & Charles, Newton Abbot & London, 1981. 528 pages; over 200 line-drawings. £15.00.

This is an incredible book. The 500-odd pages are crammed with information on 425 species which have been introduced to various parts of the world; each has a distribution map showing its native range and the areas to which it has been introduced, and more than half are illustrated by line-drawings. The mammoth task of compilation was carried out with the support of the Agriculture Protection Board of Western Australia, but the book covers the whole world. There is a 24-page bibliography and indexes both to common names and to scientific names. The maps are clear and the design excellent. The text, which must total in excess of 300,000 words, seems thoroughly researched and reliable, although it would be a miracle if transcription or other errors had not crept in here and there in such a mammoth work. The author acknowledges this and asks readers to point out any mistakes or omissions. This will be a very valuable book for any ornithological reference library: needed by *every* institution and by many individual ornithologists. J. T. R. SHARROCK

Birds of the Wadden Sea. Edited by C. J. Smit and W. J. Wolff. A. A. Balkema, Rotterdam, 1981. 308 pages. £6.00.

The 4,000 km² of intertidal flats of the Wadden Sea form Europe's most impressive wetland, stretching from Esbjerg in Denmark to Den Helder in the Netherlands. Counts indicate that at peak times over 3,000,000 estuary birds may be present, and many others pass through, stopping briefly.

This book summarises the mass of count and ecological information that has been obtained since 1931, although the majority is from the 1960s and 1970s. The bulk of the book is formed by species accounts, which have a standard format; each has two sections: first, the generalised breeding areas, migration routes and wintering and moulting areas; then follows the detailed information for the Wadden Sea, including migration patterns, moult, weight, total population, numbers recorded in each sector, food and feeding patterns and finally references.

There is a brief introduction and summary at the front and four short chapters at the end on habitat selection of waders, the importance of the Wadden Sea, invertebrate production and their consumption by birds, and threats. Although written by experts, they are too brief to bring out all the relevant discussion; this is particularly true of the last, allocated only six pages when a multitude of problems exists.

The reason for brevity may be that this volume is one of three, encompassing 11 reports on the Wadden Sea. The set is entitled *Ecology of the Wadden Sea: basic data for the management of Europe's largest marine wetland*. It costs £19 and includes one on *Physical Planning and Nature Management*.

Although the book is packed full of information, this remains easily accessible. It will undoubtedly open the eyes of any birdwatcher who scratches the surface with a visit to Texel, as well as providing hard facts for the serious student of numbers and migrations of estuary birds. At this price, this cloth-bound edition does make an attractive reference book.

A. J. PRATER

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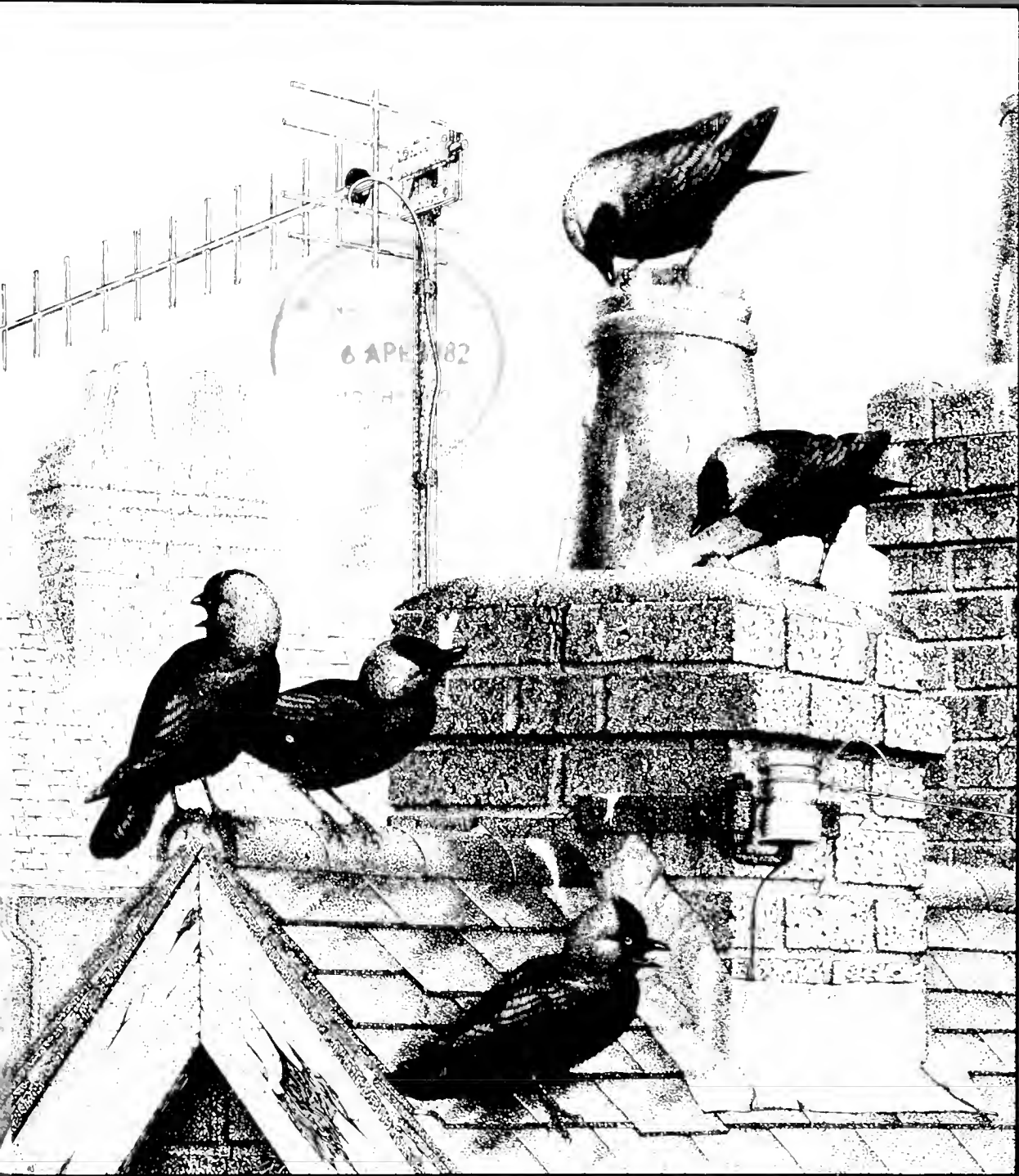
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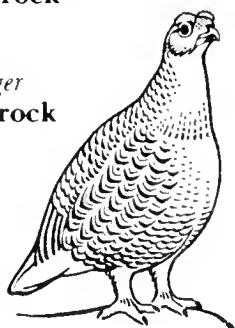
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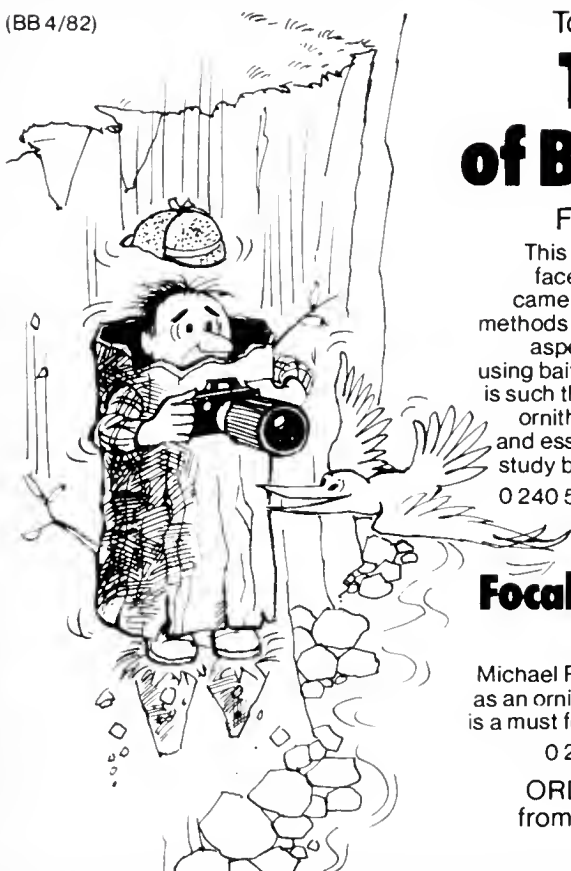
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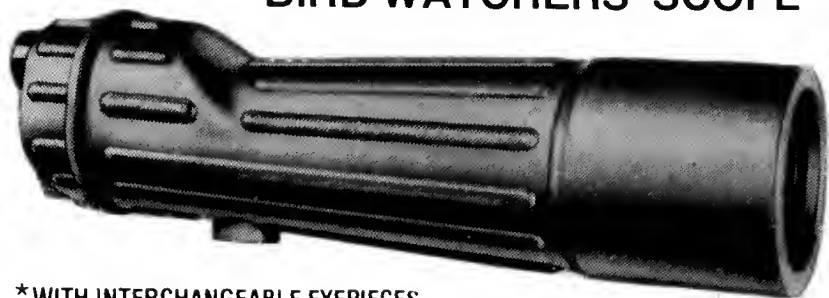
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 4 APRIL 1982



Photographic equipment for bird-photography



R. J. Chandler and Don Smith

The birdwatcher who is considering adding bird-photography to his interests is faced with a bewildering assortment of equipment from which to choose. However well intentioned, the assistant at the local photographic shop is unlikely to be able to offer the specialised advice that the potential bird-photographer requires. Those who are lucky will have an experienced friend who can offer advice as to what is appropriate for the particular application in mind—the requirements of nest-photography or exhibition quality work are rather different from record shots of birds that cannot be closely approached!

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to help those who do not have ready access to specialist advice, and to indicate what would be appropriate choices of equipment for different applications. Some specific items are mentioned, both in the text and in Appendices 1 and 2, but in other instances it has been thought better merely to set out the basic specification. While we have been careful to check the specifications of the equipment that we mention, we cannot guarantee that all details are correct.

It is assumed that the reader has some basic photographic knowledge; for general photographic background reading, the potential bird-photographer is referred to the series of Focal Press guides on different aspects of photography. Recommended books on bird-photography include Arthur Gilpin's 'Nature Photography', 'Natural History Photography' edited by D. M. Turner Ettlinger (see *Brit. Birds* 70: 493) and Mike Richards's 'Focal Guide to Bird Photography' (*Brit. Birds* 73: 603).

Choice of camera

The basic choice for the bird-photographer lies between 'medium-format' cameras, which produce a negative size typically 6cm × 5.4cm or 6cm × 6cm, and 35-mm format cameras with a negative size of 36mm × 24mm. Larger-format equipment is used for bird-photography, almost always for nest-photography, but the equipment is large, relatively cumbersome and rather specialised, and will not be discussed further here. Similarly, smaller formats than 35mm could be used, but the drawbacks of small negative size and the inability of almost all 'miniature' cameras to accept lenses of sufficient focal length for bird-photography make this type of camera inappropriate.

Medium-format and 35-mm cameras may be obtained in three basically different types: twin-lens reflex, single-lens reflex and range-finder. In general, medium-format cameras are of the first two types, 35-mm cameras of the latter two. With the twin-lens reflex, focusing and composition is done through one lens, while the second lens incorporates the shutter and is used when taking the photograph. Though relatively inexpensive, twin-lens reflex cameras have the disadvantage that the resulting picture is not of quite the same view as that used for composition—though this can be corrected for—and only one make (*Mamiya C330*) offers interchangeable lenses, while the largest focal length of these (250mm) is rather short for any purpose but nest work or photography of large and approachable species.

Although some range-finder cameras have an interchangeable lens facility, there are no longer any in production. Consequently, all currently available medium and 35-mm format cameras with an interchangeable lens facility are of the single-lens reflex (SLR) type, in which a single lens is used, composition and focusing being carried out through a pentaprism eye-level viewfinder, a 45° mirror being interplated between the lens and the film to make this possible. When the shutter is released, the mirror hinges up, and the shutter opens allowing the image to fall directly on the film. In this manner, the viewfinder shows exactly the view (though often with the margins cut off) seen in the consequent photograph. Some SLRs (e.g. *Canon F-1*; *Nikon F2* and *F3*; *Pentax LX*; and most medium-format cameras) feature interchangeable viewfinders enabling a waist-level finder to be used; these, however, give a reversed (left for right) image that makes photography of a moving bird practically impossible.

The single-lens reflex system, at least in the 35-mm format, requires the use of a focal-plane shutter: essentially a slot of adjustable width that travels across the film plane. The width of the slot can be adjusted so that the narrower the slot, the faster the exposure time. In most instances, the minimum exposure time is 1/1000th second, though in some cases (e.g. *Canon F1*; *Chinon CE-4S*; *Contax RTS*; *Nikon F2* and *F3*; *Pentax LX* and *ME Super*; *Hasselblad 2000 FC*) the fastest exposure is 1/2000th, which can be useful, particularly when photographing birds in flight. If flight photography is to be attempted, the camera should have a minimum speed of at most 1/1000th second.

The mechanics of the combined mirror lift and focal-plane shutter are often noisy, thus perhaps disturbing the bird which one is trying to

photograph, and also may cause vibration and thus reduce the sharpness of the subsequent photographs, particularly at lower shutter speeds. In some cases, cameras are fitted with a facility for lifting the mirror prior to firing the shutter, but this means that one is then unsighted. Alternatively, and again only with some cameras, the delayed shutter release (where one is fitted) lifts the mirror for the period of the delay prior to the shutter firing, helping to minimise noise and vibration. Unfortunately, it is rarely possible to use either of these two techniques, and usually one must put up with the problem.

Some of the medium-format cameras (e.g. *Bronica* ETR, ETR-S and SQ; *Hasselblad* 500; *Mamiya* C330F and MRB67; *Rolleiflex* SLX; *Yashica* MAT 124G) have a leaf-type shutter within the lens, which is both very quiet and virtually vibration-free; this type of shutter has the added advantage of synchronising with flash at all speeds, whereas the focal-plane type will generally synchronise only at exposure times longer than 1/60th or 1/125th second. The majority of bird-photographers will not find this a drawback.

Most modern SLR cameras have some means of measuring or metering the exposure time/lens aperture combination for the speed of film being used. This may be either of the 'automatic' or of the 'match-needle' type. In the former, either the lens is set to the required aperture, and the metering system automatically sets the appropriate shutter speed (known as 'aperture-priority', which is a feature of many 35-mm automatics, and *Bronica* ETR with AE11 finder), or the shutter speed is set and the aperture is automatically adjusted ('shutter-priority': e.g. *Canon* AE1; *Konica* Autoreflex TC, FC-1; *Mamiya* NC1000S). Camera bodies are usually of one type or the other, though some can be set to either priority ('multi-mode': e.g. *Canon* A1 and AE1 Program; *Fujica* AX-5; *Leica* R4; *Mamiya* ZE-X; *Minolta* XD-5 and XD-7). For fixed-aperture mirror lenses and lenses without automatic diaphragms (as discussed later), an aperture-priority camera is required.

The match-needle metering camera (which includes most, but not all, non-automatic cameras) has a pointer in the view-finder which, when set to a given position, by adjusting either the lens aperture or shutter speed, ensures the correct exposure. There is no doubt that, particularly when working in colour where more accurate exposure is generally needed, internal metering of one of the foregoing types can be very useful. The automatic-exposure facility is not necessarily foolproof: considerable underexposure, leading to a silhouette effect, is possible, particularly when photographing birds in flight against a bright sky, or when photographing birds over water into the light. This problem is partially overcome by a metering system which is centre-weighted—that is, it takes more account of the central area of the picture (generally an advantage in bird-photography)—but there is a clear need for an automatic camera to have either an over-riding facility so that exposure may be increased manually by 1½ to 2 stops in this situation (which can also be done by adjusting the film speed), or to have a 'memory button', by means of which the aperture/shutter combination is set on some convenient similarly lit object, and locked so that the against-the-light shot is correctly exposed.

Many cameras of both formats can now be fitted with motor drives, which automatically wind-on the film and re-set the shutter; some motor drives enable the shutter to be fired at up to five or six frames per second if the shutter release is held down continuously, and in addition allow single frames only to be exposed. Where only the latter facility is available, the unit is known as an 'auto-wind'. These accessories are of particular advantage for flight photography, and can also be useful if the camera is to be triggered by remote-control. The main disadvantage is the noise made by the motor winding-on, which may on occasion be unacceptable, particularly when working close to the bird (e.g. from a hide).

Most 35-mm SLR cameras are nowadays fitted with a centre 'split-image' viewfinder screen as an aid to focusing. These screens suffer the drawback that, when used with lenses with a maximum aperture of about f5.6, the central split-image area goes blank, so that focusing must be done using the surrounding plain ground-glass area. The more expensive cameras feature interchangeable screens (e.g. *Canon F1*; *Contax RTS*; *Leica R4*; *Mamiya NC1000S*; *Nikon F2*, *FE* and *F3*; *Olympus OM-1N* and *OM-2N*; *Pentax LX*; and most medium-format cameras), enabling a plain fresnel screen to be used; but many photographers simply put up with the problem!

Lenses for bird-photography

While the bird-photographer will generally use a relatively long focal length lens, it is always best to work with the shortest focal length possible. Generally, lens quality is highest at the shorter focal lengths—135 mm with 35-mm format—while problems of shake and smaller maximum apertures lead to deterioration of picture quality with the longer lenses, particularly in poor light where high shutter speeds are not possible. Consequently, most photographers will work whenever possible with lenses of the order of 200 mm focal length in medium-format or 135 mm with 35-mm equipment.

In many situations, particularly when stalking or with wait-and-see work from a car or hide, longer focal length lenses are required, and lenses of 400 mm or 500 mm focal length are most commonly used. Again, a shorter focal length lens should be used if possible. Most lenses now on the market are of the automatic diaphragm type, which enable focusing (and usually metering also) to be done at full aperture with the maximum of light giving a bright image in the viewfinder, the lens closing down automatically to the desired stop when the shutter is released. The cheapest lenses are often of the 'pre-set' type, where stopping down has to be done manually; these lenses may be perfectly satisfactory, particularly as one often needs to expose at or close to maximum aperture.

Particular points to note are that a tripod mount on the lens can be very useful, particularly if a 'gun' or other support is to be used, and that a fairly close focusing capability is necessary if small birds are to be photographed—distances of 4-5 m are needed to get adequate image sizes of sparrow-sized birds with a 400-mm lens. Extension tubes can be used to enable a lens to focus more closely, but these cannot be fitted in a hurry; moreover, they reduce the effective aperture of the lens, necessitating the use of a slower shutter speed. Once a tube is fitted, it is impossible to focus

on more distant objects, and, with the cheaper extension tubes which have no coupling linkage, the auto-diaphragm facility of the lens will be lost.

An increasing number of mirror lenses are coming on to the market; these currently range in focal length from about 250mm to 2000mm, though 500mm focal length lenses are both the most frequently used and the most freely available. The advantage of this type of lens is its compactness—500-mm lenses can easily be carried all day if necessary—and its close focusing capability, which for a 500mm focal length is typically 4m. Some models will focus to 1m or so, though this is probably of little advantage for the bird-photographer. The drawbacks of mirror lenses are that they are of fixed aperture (usually f8 with a 500-mm lens) and hence present a fixed and rather shallow depth of field, which is satisfactory for single birds, but is less so for flocks, even of relatively distant birds. Exposure can be controlled, therefore, only by adjusting the shutter speed, or by the use of neutral density filters. On some lenses, these and other filters can be 'dialed' into place without removing the lens (filters are usually fitted at the camera-end of a mirror lens), but this facility will be rarely, if ever, used by most bird-photographers. The construction of a mirror lens is such that out-of-focus objects often appear as rings or double images. This may be unremarkable with a plain background—water, for instance—but may be quite objectionable where the background is more complex.

If a series of lenses may eventually be purchased, it is much more satisfactory if all focus in the same direction; preferably, too, in the same direction as one's binoculars. It is a considerable disadvantage, particularly with flight photography, if, on changing from one lens to another, it is necessary to focus clockwise with one lens and anti-clockwise with the next. In such circumstances, focusing can never become instinctive.

Novoflex lenses, of conventional 'pre-set' design but with a 'gun' mount, can be used for bird-photography, and are particularly popular on the Continent. The gun-mount features a unique squeeze-grip focusing device which can be very quick in use. Close focusing, however, requires the use of a built-in extension tube, and the whole assembly is relatively bulky.

The recent introduction of fluorite or 'low-dispersion' glass in long-focal lenses is an important advance in lens development. Image quality is improved by the use of this glass, which has a low coefficient of refraction and hence refracts light of different wavelengths more uniformly, bringing the different colours of light to focus more precisely on the film plane than is possible with conventional glass. At present only some of the major manufacturers produce such lenses (e.g. *Canon*; *Nikon*), and, although well suited to bird-photography, they are at present expensive. Appendix 2 lists some 35-mm format telephoto and mirror lenses suitable for bird-photography.

Tele-converters, which are essentially an extra magnifying element which typically doubles the image size, offer an inexpensive means of increasing the focal length of a lens; $\times 1.5$ and $\times 3$ converters are also available. Unfortunately, some of these are optically inferior, and all reduce the maximum aperture of the prime lens, the $\times 2$ converters doing so by two stops. Except for the most expensive converters (made by the camera manufacturers and not by the independent lens manufacturers), our

experience has not always been favourable. We suggest that converters should be regarded as an emergency or 'last chance' measure; particularly with black-and-white work, it is generally better to double the size of the picture at the enlarging stage rather than use a converter.

Camera supports

Whatever focal length of lens is being used, the resulting photograph will be improved if the camera is solidly supported. Working from a hide (or even on occasion when stalking) a tripod will be used. This should be both solid and reasonably heavy, the latter being an advantage since weight helps to absorb the energy released when the mirror/shutter combination is triggered. A minimum weight of 2½ kg is suggested, the tripod being combined with a smoothly operating pan-and-tilt rather than a ball-point type head, the movements being much more controlled with the former. Check that the tripod is capable of the adjustment that will be required; it may need to be set fairly low when operating from a small hide, or, if using a car as a hide, it can be essential to have a tripod with legs that can be adjusted independently. Other points to note are whether the tripod feet will rust if used in wet or salty conditions, and if the tripod head allows a relatively bulky motor-drive to be attached, or the camera body to be rotated through 90° to allow vertical format shots, or to be removed while leaving the lens in place. The latter facility can be surprisingly useful in a hide when working with black-and-white film in one camera and colour in a second: a lens without a tripod mount is a positive handicap.

The same caveat also applies to the use of a gun or rifle-grip; these are invaluable for stalking, and enable the camera to be held more steadily than would otherwise be the case, the trigger being provided by a cable release, the stock of the gun being held firmly to the shoulder. A good rule, when the camera is hand held and without support, is that camera shake can be avoided if the shutter speed is equal to or faster than the reciprocal of the lens' focal length (e.g. 1/500th second for a 500-mm lens). With a rifle-grip, speeds of 1/250th or even 1/125th can be used with a 500-mm lens, though several exposures may be necessary to ensure a sharp result. Slower shutter speeds than this demand the use of a good tripod. Monopods can also be fitted; *Gitzo* conveniently make one with a shoulder support, though less expensive makes could be used with or without a rifle-grip as shoulder support. Another useful accessory is a bean-bag, used to cushion the camera/lens combination on a support such as a car windowsill or fence rail.

Conclusions

We hope that we have given the potential bird-photographer some idea of the type of equipment he will need, and the features of both cameras and lenses that will be of most value to him.

In order to enable a potential purchaser to compare specifications of different items of equipment, we list for relevant items of equipment some recent guides and comparative test reports that have appeared in the photographic press (see Appendix 1).

There is no doubt that the highest quality photographic work requires

the use of a medium- or even large-format camera, and a relatively short focal length lens; it follows that the bird must be closely approached so that the image on the negative is of reasonable size. There are many situations where a close approach to the bird is not possible, or where some degree of mobility is required by the photographer, rendering impractical the use of relatively bulky and heavy medium-format equipment. In this case, the lighter weight (and lower cost) of 35-mm format equipment, particularly with larger focal length lenses, is more appropriate. Again, the golden rule is always to use as short a focal length lens as possible; provided a reasonably large image size can be obtained, high quality results can be obtained with 35-mm equipment.

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Appendix 1. Sources of information on photographic equipment

This list makes no pretence to be complete; it gives 'Guides' (generally a tabulation of the more important features of cameras and lenses that enable equipment of different makes to be compared) and 'Comparative Test Reports' (detailed reports comparing the features and performance of similar pieces of equipment of different makes). In most instances, copies of these reports can be obtained from the magazine concerned (see a current number of the relevant magazine for details). In addition to the guides listed below, several photographic magazines print guides to available cameras in each issue.

LENS GUIDE. *Amateur Photographer*. A periodic guide, part 2 of which lists all available lenses of focal length 55 mm or longer; most recent issue: 27th June 1981.

REFLEX CAMERA GUIDE. *Amateur Photographer*. A periodic guide; most recent issue: 14th November 1981.

AUTOMATIC SLR CAMERAS. *Which?*, April 1980; comparative test report on 24 makes of 35-mm camera.

MEDIUM-FORMAT, TWIN-LENS REFLEX CAMERAS. *Amateur Photographer*, 13th December 1978. Comparative test report on three makes of 6 cm × 6 cm camera.

300-MM LENSES. *SLR Camera*, April 1981; comparative test report on 15 makes of 35-mm lens.

MIRROR LENSES. *What Camera Weekly*, 11th July 1981; comparative test report on 12 lenses, focal length 250 mm to 600 mm, for 35-mm cameras. *Amateur Photographer*, 10th January 1981; comparative test report on eight lenses, focal length 300 mm to 600 mm, for 35-mm cameras.

TELECONVERTERS. *Amateur Photographer*, 2nd and 16th August 1980; comparative test report on 14 × 2 teleconverters for 35-mm cameras.

Similar reports on individual items of equipment are far too numerous to list.

Appendix 2. Long focal length lenses with close focusing facilities

Conventional (i.e. not mirror) 35-mm format lenses of 300 mm focal length which focus down to 3 m (or closer) include:

Canon FD f2.8, f4 and f5.6; *Nikkor* IFED f4.5; (*Minolta*) *Rokkor* MD f4.5; *Sigma* Apochromatic; *Kenlock*; *Mitakon*; *Osawa*; and *Tamron* SP.

Conventional 35-mm format lenses of 400 mm focal length which focus down to 4 m (or closer) include:

Canon FD f2.8 and f4.5; *Hexanon* UC; *Hoya* HMC; *Kenlock*; *Mitakon*; *Mitsuki*; *Nikkor* IFED f5.6; *Osawa*; *Sigma* Apochromatic; *Tokina*; *Vivitar*; (*Leica*) *Telyt* M and R.

Mirror lenses of 35-mm format of 500 mm focal length (all focus to 4 m or closer, and have an aperture of f8 except where noted) include:

Canon; *Chinon*; *Hanimex*; *Kenlock*; *MTO* 3M5A; *Nikkor*; *Ohnar*; *Panagor*; *Photax* Super Paragon; *Soligor*; *Sunagor*; *Tamron* SP; (*Leica*) *Telyt* R; *Tokina*; *Yashica*; *Zeiss* Mirotar (f4.5).

Note that a number of the above lenses do not have a tripod mount.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1980



J. T. R. Sharrock and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

It is a real pleasure to be able to report that, in 1980, records were received from all the county and regional report editors, for the first time since these annual reports started in 1973. Many county recorders have also gone to the trouble to check their files against our past reports and notify additions and corrections to us. We wish to express our thanks for this co-operation, which not only increases the scientific value of our report, but also enables it to be of much more help in the making of policy decisions by conservation bodies such as the RSPB and the NCC.

We are also pleased that the data being supplied to us by most recorders are increasingly detailed and, therefore, increasingly useful. Our annual report provides a brief summary of this information, which serves three purposes: (1) archive, (2) conservation, and (3) research. Only general summaries are ever made available for purposes (2) and (3) without specific approval from the relevant recorder. The prime purpose of the Panel, however, is to provide a safe, central repository for detailed information which might otherwise be lost to posterity, as has often happened in the past.

The Panel is supported, both morally and financially, by *British Birds*, the BTO, the RSPB and the NCC. During 1980, the Panel's members were Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Ian Prestt, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (secretary) and Robert Spencer.

Most records reach the Panel from the county and regional recorders. Individual observers are strongly encouraged to submit their data via the relevant county recorder, although it is recognised that there may very occasionally be exceptional reasons for sending a report directly to the Panel's secretary. The special forms for submitting records are available free from the address at the end of this report.

The policy in our published reports is to include information only when safe to do so, and provided that we have received permission; we publish basic details, sufficient for the purposes of most researchers and enough to give birdwatchers a balanced annual summary of the events concerning the United Kingdom's rarest breeding birds.

In this report, counties are named only when permission has been given. In other cases, code letters are used: these are the same as in previous reports, so that histories of decline or colonisation can be followed, even though the locations must remain confidential to ensure freedom from disturbance. This report contains a mixture of old and new county names: we have used those supplied by the recorders.

For most species, we have given a range of figures for 'pairs breeding', the lower representing the number confirmed breeding and the upper (those 'possibly breeding') the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair. Although these ranges are often very wide, they can be calculated consistently each year and are, we believe, valuable for comparisons.

Summary of the year

The year 1980 was interesting, with many encouraging signs, especially in Scotland. It was good for grebes, with the first-ever nesting of a pair of Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* (though no young were reared and apparently no eggs laid) and indications that both Slavonian *P. auritus* and Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* may be increasing. One unexpected development was that involving a pair of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* which apparently took up territory. Less unexpected was the further advance of the Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*.

It was a good year for the big raptors. Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* both reared their highest number of young in any year this century, and Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* achieved their second-highest total. Credit for these achievements is due partly to the birds, but perhaps largely to the conservation bodies for ensuring the maintenance of suitable habitat or ensuring, by wardening, lack of disturbance, or both. The same may be said for the Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, of which more were present at more sites than at any time for 150 years. Other waders also did well: the small but expanding population of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii*, the three-years-in-a-row Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima*, and the Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, with a best-ever showing.

Some passerines also made 1980 memorable. Two male Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* (one red-spotted *L. s. svecica* and one white-spotted *L. s. cyanecula*) sang in suitable habitat, and, as an appropriate accompaniment, Redwings *Turdus iliacus*—in the doldrums for four years—were evident in the largest numbers since the all-time high of 1975. Continuing already-encouraging trends, Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus*, Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* and Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* turned in, respectively, their second, fourth and fifth good years in a row. Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* slowly advanced (one currently wonders what effect the 1981/82 winter will have had on this species).

A Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* joined a long list of would-be colonists (e.g. Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Scaup *Aythya marila*, King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus*, Firecrest, and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*) which, failing to find a mate of their own species, have turned to the next best thing, a close relation. Among other potential colonists, Bramblings are trying, but Serins *Serinus serinus* and Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* clearly aren't, while Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* sadly dropped to a single pair.

The two new species added to our lists both proved to be at dismally low levels: only three pairs of Garganeys *Anas querquedula* were proved to breed

in the whole of the United Kingdom, and, outside their Devon stronghold, breeding was confirmed for only six pairs of Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus*.

Systematic list

We have received no relevant 1980 records of the following species:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*
Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

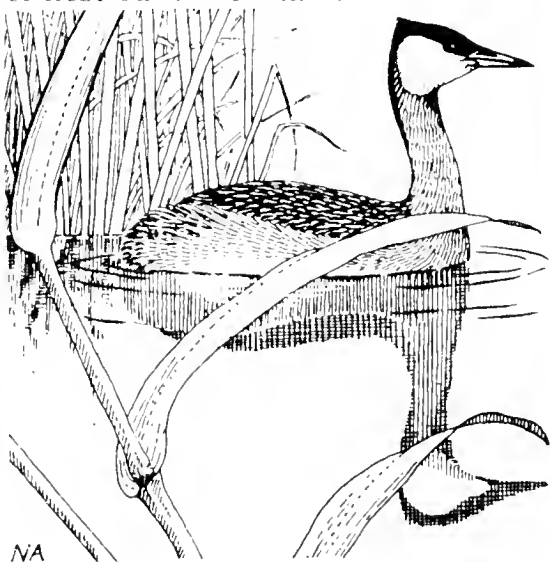
Three sites: 0-3 pairs breeding; first ever nest built in Britain.

Essex One site: one from 26th May to 25th June.

County A One site: one from at least 22nd June to 21st July.

County B One site: pair built nest, but did not lay eggs; first seen 11th June, built raft on 12th June, when displayed and copulated (on raft), display continued until 26th, when new nest found, adult covered nest when leaving, still sitting on 3rd July and covering nest when leaving, but nest still empty, pair left area before mid July; presumably young pair making first breeding attempt.

Colonisation moved one step nearer with a pair building a nest at one of two Scottish sites.



Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

36 sites: 53-80 pairs breeding, at least 39 young reared.

Inverness-shire 32 sites: (1)-(32) total of 72 pairs, 50-52 pairs confirmed breeding (at 22 sites) and total of 33-34 young reared.

Sutherland One site: single on 20th May.

County A One site: up to five pairs, with two pairs confirmed breeding, and five young on 10th August.

County B Two sites: (1) pair reared one young; (2) single on 10th and 11th April.

1978 County A One site: seven adults in May.

1979 Inverness-shire 24 sites: (1)-(24) total of at least 50 to 67 pairs breeding, 37 young reared.

Excluding 1975, when Inverness-shire sites were incompletely covered, the mean number of pairs breeding since these reports started in 1973 has been 52-63, so the number confirmed in 1980 was about average, but the possible maximum was the highest (previous maximum, 75 in 1976).

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Nine sites: 11-21 pairs breeding, at least 14 young reared.

County A Two sites: (1) six pairs reared eight young; (2) three pairs reared one young.

County B Two sites: (1) three or four pairs on 30th May, none on 1th July; (2) single 19th July.

County D One site: two pairs, one with two half-grown young on 3rd July, one with one young about ten days old on 16th August.

County G Two sites: (1) pair from 27th April to 29th May, displaying and carrying nesting material; (2) single from 15th March, two from 22nd March to 5th April, then none until single 17th August, then two or three until 31st August, single to 20th September.

County I One site: two returned on 5th May, later left, one returned 5th June, later left.

County J Two sites: (1) single from 12th May to 8th August; (2) three, including pair displaying, on one date in May, single next day.

Although the totals remained similar to previous years, the number of sites and number of counties involved continue to increase, giving hope that breeding may spread.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One site: single again summered with Gannets *Sula bassana*.

Shetland One site: single which has frequented Hermaness gannetry annually since 1971 again summered and built nest, 15th March to 2nd August.

Perhaps one day it might find a mate . . .

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

19 sites: 4-48 pairs breeding.

Glamorgan, West One site: single from 22nd January to 29th August, booming from 16th February onwards.

Kent One site: two or more booming occasionally in April-May, 'breeding unlikely'.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) 12 booming at Leighton Moss; (2) one booming in spring.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: single all year, booming in summer.

Norfolk Eight sites: (1) single booming, two nests; (2) pair reared young; (3) pair with nest and two eggs on 13th June; (4) single booming, one nest; (5) three booming; (6)-(8) singles booming.

Northumberland One site: two from December 1979 until at least 23rd March, booming on many dates from 9th February to 9th June, single from 23rd March to end of year.

Suffolk Three sites, but no proved breeding: (1) Minsmere, nine pairs; (2) Walberswick, seven pairs; (3) one pair.

Somerset One site: single booming on 27th May.

County C One site: single booming on 9th June.

1977 Lancashire Second site: (2) single booming.

1979 Glamorgan, West One site: single from January to June, booming from March to June (rehabilitated individual released on 24th April).

1979 Kent One site: three territories with singles booming, some probable feeding flights observed.

Since this species was added to our list, annual totals have been: 1977, 18 sites, 0-43 pairs; 1978, 17 sites, 2-47 pairs; and 1979, 21 sites, 1-51 pairs. Thus, the number of sites and pairs in 1980 were both at roughly the 1977-79 average.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Two sites: 0-2 pairs breeding.

Glamorgan, West One site: male on 25th May and 30th June, where singles also in June and August 1976 and September 1977.

Hertfordshire Male on 9th June, presumed to be migrant.

County A One site: female on 29th June, pair on 30th, male 'barking' during 5th-9th July, male seen 19th July.

Proof of breeding may come one day, but will probably depend upon fledglings being sighted at a regularly watched site.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

No relevant records in 1980.

1975 Glamorgan, West One site: first-summer from 7th May to 27th June and adult on 6th July.

Summering was also noted in 1976, 1977 and 1979.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Three sites: 1-3 pairs breeding; one with feral female reared two young.

Argyll Two sites: (1) three adults on 7th July; (2) two adults on 6th July.

Dunbartonshire One site: pair (believed to be wild male and escaped pinioned female that reared one young in 1979) reared two young.

A feral breeding population may be in the course of becoming established in Loch Lomondside.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

One site: 0-1 pair breeding.

County A One site: pair showing territorial behaviour, including chasing feral Greylag Geese *A. anser* from one particular island, on 1st June.

This is the first occasion that this species has appeared in these reports; the locality was, however, atypical for this species, which suggests that escaped or injured individuals may have been involved.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

One site: female probably paired with male Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* and hatched two young.

Scilly One site: female with two ducklings seven to ten days old on 13th and 16th May; female reappeared on 11th August.

This is the fourth successive year in which hybrid young have been produced in Scilly.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

15 sites: 9-25 pairs breeding.

Argyll Two sites: (1) three females, two with young, on 6th July; (2) female on 6th July.

Berwickshire One site: pair throughout May, female 'disappeared', male stayed until at least early July, female and any young could have been overlooked among numerous Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*.

Caithness One site: pair, nest with five eggs on 14th June.

Cambridgeshire One site: two pairs, including female with six young.

Cheshire Two sites: (1) four males and three females in late April, pair remained until late July, three in early July; (2) male and two females from 7th-12th June, not present rest of summer.

Kent Three sites: (1) four on 11th July; (2) pair on 1st May; (3) male from 3rd-24th May.

Kirkcudbrightshire/Wigtownshire One site: two pairs, with three young and two young.

Lancashire One site: pair in late May and irregularly in June.

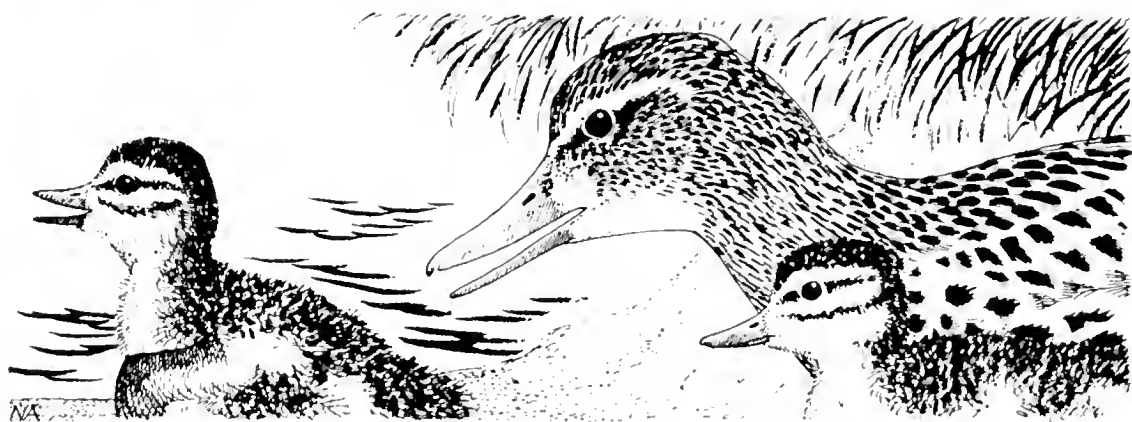
Orkney Two sites: (1) two females giving distraction display on 8th June, adults and juveniles on 29th August; (2) female with three young on 24th July.

Suffolk One site: one summered June-July.

1979 Kent Third site: (3) male from 13th-21st April, 'behaviour suggestive of breeding attempt'.

1979 Kirkcudbrightshire/Wigtownshire One site: pair hatched five young.

There were about average numbers in 1980. The late 1979 records bring that year's totals to 19 sites with ten to 41 pairs breeding.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

33 sites: 3-53 pairs breeding.

Avon One site: pair and second male throughout breeding season.

Berkshire One site: male and two females on 23rd April, male from 30th July to mid September, joined by females from 21st August to mid September.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) four or five males present, four pairs estimated; (2) male on 19th April.

Cambridgeshire/Norfolk One site: Ouse Washes, eight or nine males in spring, two females with young in June.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) female on 15th May; (2) male on 13th June.

Derbyshire/Leicestershire One site: pair from 30th March to at least 4th May.

Devon Three sites: (1)(2) pairs in mid April; (3) male in mid April; also pair in May in habitat unsuitable for breeding.

Dorset One site: pair summered.

Essex Three sites: (1) female on 7th June; (2) female from 13th-18th June; (3) single on 26th May.

Kent Two sites: (1) three pairs; (2) two pairs.

Leicestershire One site: pair in late April and early May.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Six sites: (1) two pairs on 18th April, one pair remained to breed, female and three young on 9th August; (2) one pair (female sometimes absent) from 19th April to 12th May; (3)-(6) males in April or May.

Norfolk Two sites: (1)(2) males on 25th May and 10th June.

Outer Hebrides Two sites: (1) pair on 5th June; (2) male on 22nd May.

Renfrewshire One site: male on 29th April.

Suffolk Two sites: (1)(2) single pairs probably bred.

Tyne & Wear One site: male and three females from 14th-26th April, pair until 13th May.

County A One site: pair during breeding season.

This is the first year in which records of this species have been collected by the Panel. Its inclusion in the list is fully justified by the very meagre showing in 1980: only three pairs proved breeding in the whole of the United Kingdom and very little indication that those at 24 of the 33 sites were other than lingering migrants; in 'good years', however, such individuals could well stay and breed.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites, but no breeding indications.

Essex Two sites: (1) three on 16th July; (2) female from 7th May to 24th July, male from 7th-12th July.

With past instances of nesting by infertile female in Suffolk in 1967-71 and pairing of probable hybrid female with Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* in North Yorkshire in 1978-79, these summer records in Essex are worthy of note. The only recent breeding records of pure pairs have been in Orkney (1973 and 1978) and Perthshire (1970).

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*

Single male associating with female Eider *S. mollissima*.

County A One site: male kept company with female Eider from early April to mid June, ducklings also present, but no evidence that they were hybrids.

Hybridisation seems very likely to occur; colonisation by pure King Eider pairs is an exceedingly unlikely possibility.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Ten sites: 7-113 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: pair in second half of June.

Dunbartonshire/Stirlingshire One site: six pairs and two males on 16th May, a few females but no young seen during 10th June to 21st July.

Fermanagh One site: 87 pairs, maximum day-counts of six broods, and of 33 young on 13th July.

Inverness-shire Three sites: (1) present, but no count made, pair nearby on 25th May; (2) seven adults on 21st May; (3) female on 21st June.

Perthshire Two sites: (1) pair and four females on 10th May, two males and three females on 21st May, groups of four and two females/juveniles on 31st August; (2) pair in May (also on nearby loch), female with four young on 7th July.

Ross-shire Two sites: (1) eight adults on 28th May; (2) pair in late May.

A further reduction, following the lowest post-Atlas figure in 1979.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

At least 11 sites: 26 to 37 or more pairs breeding, 165 young hatched.

Cumbria Six sites: (1)-(6) singles (one pair) on various dates during May-August.

Dunbartonshire/west Stirlingshire One site: male and two females on 8th June, male found dead on 11th June.

Suffolk One site: female from 11th-22nd July.

County A Two sites: (1)(2) females summered.

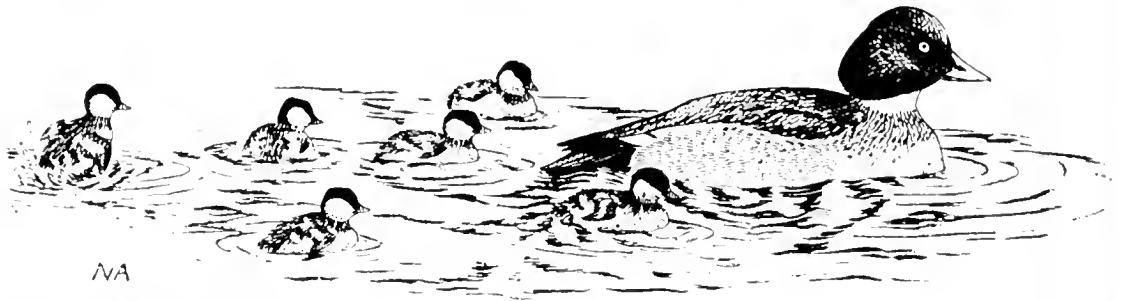
County B Females laid eggs in 26 nests (25 in nestboxes), 21 clutches incubated, 165 ducklings hatched from 17 successful nests; also many summering.

1978 County A One site: pair summered.

1979 Greater Manchester One site: female on 17th and 24th June.

1979 Lancashire One site: female on 31st May.

The population continues to expand satisfactorily.

**Smew** *Mergus albellus*

Two sites: single male and single female.

Dunbartonshire/west Stirlingshire One site: male from 9th March to 7th August.

Renfrewshire One site: female (or immature) during August.

1979 Renfrewshire One site: female (or immature) during August.

If they get together . . .

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Three sites: 2-4 pairs breeding.

Bedfordshire One site: single on 3rd and 9th August.

Nottinghamshire One site: pair bred (success not known) and one or two other individuals.

County F One site: pair displaying in June, soaring and carrying food in August, breeding proved.

1976 Hertfordshire One site: single on 20th June.

1976 County F One site: single in August.

1979 Nottinghamshire One site: pair, which drove away a third individual, reared one young.

Regrettably, data are still not supplied to any conservation body by observers in the main breeding area, so current trends are unknown.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

39 pairs: 27 young reared by 21 pairs.

Central Wales Total of 39 pairs, of which 36 built nests, but only 28 laid eggs; 21 pairs reared a total of 27 young (six broods of two and 15 of one); also at least 20 unpaired individuals.

Reporter commented that the number of fledged young was a record for this century and the proportion of successful nests was the highest for 20 years, due to fine, dry weather in April-May. The total of about 100 adults present in spring bodes well for the future, as does the good news that there were no known losses due to egg-collectors.



Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

32 sites: probably 18-26 pairs breeding; 40 young reared.

Cambridgeshire Three sites, but no suspected breeding: (1) adult female and female or immature in May, two immatures (at least one male) in June; (2) male on 14th April; (3) female from late April to early June, two in early May.

Essex One site: one from late May to mid June.

Kent Three sites: (1) male and two females from mid May to late July, stick-carrying reported, but no other evidence of breeding; (2) two (once three) females or immatures from late May to early July, male in late July; (3) pair from mid April, stick-carrying seen on 16th April and 7th May.

Lancashire One site: male from 5th May to end of August.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Eight sites: (1) at least three different birds, including subadult male, between early June and early September; (2)-(8) singles occasionally or once in June or July.

Norfolk Ten sites: (1) two pairs, one rearing four young, second pair built nest but did not lay eggs; (2) two pairs, one rearing four young, second pair disappearing; (3) two pairs, both unsuccessful; (4) pair reared five young; (5)-(8) pairs each reared two young; (9) pair reared one young; (10) male with two females, one reared two young, other none.

Suffolk Six sites: (1) two males and three females reared ten young; (2) two pairs reared six young; (3) pair, success unknown; (4) pair, success unknown, but thought to have failed; (5)(6) pairs failed.

County F One site: female from 5th May, male from 14th May, nest-building from 18th May, male found poisoned in June.

1975 West Glamorgan One site: female from 8th May to 28th June.

1979 Kent One site: three different adult males and two or three females during April to August, few staying more than a week.

Another good year, with the second-highest total of young reared this

century (exceeded only by 44 in 1977), a continuing increase in the number of wandering individuals and summerers, and a breeding attempt well outside the main Norfolk-Suffolk stronghold.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Seven sites: 2-7 pairs breeding, at least four young reared.

County C One site: female from 2nd May, second-year male from 5th May, but 'things then fizzled out'.

County D One site: one pair successfully reared young, but details not submitted to county recorder.

County H One site: pair from spring to early August, when pair seen with one juvenile, 'very likely that they had bred and reared at least one young, but possible that they bred elsewhere, though this unlikely in view of spring and summer records'.

County I One site: male and female during summer.

County J One site: male from 8th May to 2nd July, seen displaying and carrying nesting material, but no female observed.

County K One site: adult male 26th June to 1st July.

County L One site: pair with three flying juveniles still being fed by adults on 10th August.

1973 Gwent Two sites: (1) single from late May to early June; (2) single on 9th June.

This species continues to maintain a foothold here as a breeding species. Observers are asked not to visit known sites and not to disturb pairs at any new sites. We recommend that the RSPB should be informed at once so that, if necessary, landowners can be alerted and appropriate measures considered (telephone Sandy (0767) 80551 and ask for Richard Porter or Mike Everett).

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

About 26 sites: 6-32 pairs breeding, at least seven young reared.

Caernarvonshire One site: male and female displaying on 9th March, two males on 22nd March, various other unsubstantiated reports during February to April, one pair may have attempted to breed.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) female on 6th April; (2) male on 3rd June.

Derbyshire One site: pair present, first nest robbed in April, repeat nest also unsuccessful.

Dunbartonshire/west Stirlingshire One site: 'many sightings, but no evidence of breeding'.

Greater Manchester One site: one adult and one immature from mid to end of April.

Norfolk One site: 'pair proved breeding'.

Nottinghamshire One lone wandering female.

County C Two sites: (1) pair, no evidence of breeding, believed introduced; (2) singles in April and May.

County G One site: pair reared three young.

County M 'Continued increase in sightings, breeding details extremely incomplete, we could have at least five pairs, but odd birds all over the place.'

County O Two sites: (1) male in late March and April; (2) reported in May, but no nest in 1978-79 site.

County T One site: pair reared three young.

County U One site: two pairs, one rearing young, other with young seen in nest.

County V Three sites: (1) pair from April and throughout summer, display seen; (2) 'pair present'; (3) odd sightings suggest possibly two pairs.

County X One site: birds (perhaps pair) present throughout year, display calls heard.

County Z Two sites: (1) pair displaying on 6th April; (2) pair in April-May.

County AA One site: male displaying on 8th March.

County BB One site: one or two seen regularly, with some display noted, from early April to mid May, probably one pair.

County CC Two sites: (1) pair, display in early April and early May, immature on 31st October; (2) female on 3rd April, male on 6th May, female on 2nd October.

1975-79 County DD One site: pair nested each year.
1978 County O One site: pair with nest; no other details supplied.
1978 County Z Two sites: (1) pair present; (2) female in May.
1979 County O One site: pair with nest; no other details supplied.
1979 County Z One site: male on 21st April.

The number of counties in which Goshawks are being reported remains high:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Counties	6	9	13	8	15	16	19	19
Pairs proved breeding	6	8	5	12	15	14	21	6
Pairs possibly breeding*	12	17	32	23	37	36	41	32

Firm establishment does, however, clearly still depend upon a reduction in disturbance and persecution.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

25 sites: 20 pairs laid eggs, 19 pairs rearing total of 41 young.

Inverness-shire Loch Garten: pair in early April disappeared after one week of nest-building; new pair reared two young from three eggs.

Perthshire Loch of the Lowes: pair reared three young.

Elsewhere in Scotland 23 sites: total of 18 pairs laid eggs, 17 pairs reared total of 36 (5 × 3, 9 × 2, 3 × 1) young.

The number of pairs was the same as in the previous year, but the number of young reared was the highest this century:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Pairs	16	14	14	14	20	22	25	25
Successful pairs	10	10	7	10	7	11	16	19
Young reared	21	20	16	20	13	19	30	41



Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

149 sites: 64-155 pairs breeding, with 41 successful pairs rearing a total of at least 86 young.

Avon Three sites: (1) adult with noisy fledged juvenile at site used in previous year on 24th August; (2) many sightings, including food-carrying; (3) singles on 10th and 27th July.

Bedfordshire Five sites: (1) pair probably bred; (2) pair possibly bred; (3) eight sightings including pair once; (4)(5) singles on eight and three occasions.

Berkshire Five sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair reared two young (sings that tree climbed, so perhaps one young removed); (3) pair reared two young; (4) pair bred; (5) singles in May-July and two on 13th August.

Cambridgeshire Four sites: (1) pair present; (2) singles on 27th April, 1st May and 17th June; (3) two on 10th May; (4) two on 10th August.

Cheshire One site: singly on 9th June and on several evenings in August.

*Throughout this report, 'Pairs possibly breeding' is the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair: the number given does, therefore, include those proved breeding.

Devon Only information supplied to us by county society was: 'Status slightly stronger than it was ten years ago, due largely to its ability to select a variety of nesting sites. A reasonable number of "floating" sub-adults present in the county in the last few breeding seasons.'

Dorset Ten pairs proved breeding.

Essex Two sites: (1) single on 6th June and 7th July; (2) pair prospecting crow nest on 18th May, not seen subsequently.

Hampshire No data supplied for the New Forest, but details from seven sites elsewhere: (1)-(3) pairs reared three, two and one young; (4) pair seen regularly; (5)(6) one or two regularly until late August or September; (7) one or two in May and early June. County recorder has commented: 'Records received give no true indication of breeding strength.'

Herefordshire One site: breeding proved, 'two adults with two juveniles'.

Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair possibly bred.

Huntingdonshire One site: pair on 8th May, adult drove off family of Kestrels *F. tinnunculus* in late May, adult on 5th July.

Kent Four sites: (1)(2) pairs reared three and one young; (3) pair; (4) one or two present.

Leicestershire Two sites: (1) pair reared at least one young; (2) pair seen repeatedly, much calling.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair with two flying young from 20th August to late September, adult once seen to feed young in flight; (2) adult and three flying young in trees containing crow nest on 23rd August.

Northamptonshire One site: pair reared two young.

Nottinghamshire Five sites: (1) food-carrying, perhaps to young in nest, seen three times; (2)-(4) pairs probably breeding; (5) probably a fifth pair.

Oxfordshire 'Minimum of eight pairs bred; two pairs raised young.'

Shropshire Two sites: (1) single on 10th June, 17th and 30th July, juvenile 3 km away on 1st September; (2) single from late May through June.

Somerset 11 sites: (1)(2) pairs reared two and two or three young; (3) family party of three on 4th September; (4) pair throughout most of breeding season; (5) nest-prospecting; (6) pair, food pass, calls thought to be from young; (7) singles from May to August; (8) single on 6th and 21st May, pair on 25th May; (9) single on 26th May and 27th July; (10)(11) singles on 2nd June and 12th July.

Staffordshire One site: adult and juvenile able to fly on 16th August.

Suffolk Seven sites: (1)(2) pairs; (3) singles throughout summer, thought to have bred; (4)-(6) singles in May and June at all three sites; (7) seen occasionally in June and July.

Surrey Nine sites: (1)-(3) pairs reared two young; (4)(5) pairs reared one young; (6) pair robbed; (7)-(10) pairs probably bred; another five pairs possibly bred.

Sussex, East & West Six sites: (1)-(6) total of six pairs reared total of 10 or 11 young.

Warwickshire One site: pair with two young in nest.

Wiltshire Ten sites: (1) two pairs each reared two young; (2)(3) pairs reared three and two young; (4) pair with one young, not known if it fledged; (5)(6) pairs; (7)-(10) 'at least four other pairs in suitable habitat'.

Worcestershire One site: pair with three young.

County E 14 sites: (1)-(3) pairs reared three young; (4)(5) pairs reared two and at least one young; (6)-(9) nests not found, but pairs with two young; (10)(11) pairs and courtship flights early in season; (12) pair in May and early June; (13) pair in May and again in late July and August; (14) single hunting in August, perhaps nesting in neighbouring county.

County F 23 sites: records suggest that 11 pairs probably bred and a further 12 pairs possibly bred.

1973 Gloucestershire Two sites: (1)(2) pairs bred.

1973 Hertfordshire Three sites: (1)-(3) singles in July.

1974 Gloucestershire One site: single.

1974 Hertfordshire Three sites: (1)-(3) pairs bred.

1974 Kent One site: pair reared two young (first breeding record since 1967).

1975 Hertfordshire Extra site: (5) pair reared two young.

1976 Gloucestershire Two sites: (1) pair from May to mid August; (2) pair displaying on 6th June.

1979 Kent Extra sites: (5) pair from 27th April to 25th August, display and food-passing in late May; (6)(7) probable pairs.

1979 Northamptonshire One site: pair reared two young, which fledged between 11th and 18th August and whole family stayed in area until the end of September.

1979 Nottinghamshire Four sites: (1)-(1) pairs, three of which reared young (numbers not reported to Panel).

The firm information supplied to us since 1973 is summarised below:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Pairs proved breeding	21	47	38	59	54	70	80	64
Pairs possibly breeding	65	96	133	143	149	156	132	155
Young reared (minimum)	24	51	12	69	78	96	72	86

The absence of any counts or even estimates for what is probably the species' main area in Britain (the New Forest) and the lack of detail from some other counties makes it difficult to determine general trends. It seems likely, however, that over 100 pairs of Hobbies nested in Britain in 1980. Assuming that breeding success for those not reported to us was roughly the same as for those that were, one can deduce that over 60 pairs nested successfully and that over 140 young Hobbies fledged.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Three sites: four males singing.

Cambridgeshire One site: two males singing on 18th May and one on 23rd.

Lancashire One site: male singing on 5th and 6th May.

Morayshire One site: male singing on 16th June.

1979 Inverness-shire One site, data not supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 24) notes: male singing during 18th-20th June.

Although proof of breeding will always be difficult to obtain, this species' status is clearly still that of an extreme rarity, for the loud and distinctive 'whip-lash' song is seldom reported:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	0	4	0	1	4	6	4	3
Singing males	0	5	0	1	7	6	8	4

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Eight sites: 168-180 pairs reared at least 101 young.

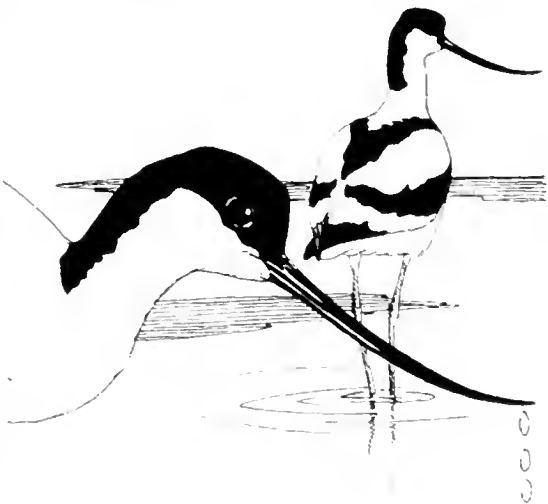
Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: single in early May and pair displaying in mid June.

Norfolk One site: 20 pairs bred, but no details supplied.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) Havergate Island, 90 pairs reared 23 young; (2) Minsmere, 58 pairs reared 78 young; (3) 'breeding attempted'; (4) up to five from 11th May to 23rd July; (5) pair on 8th June.

County B One site: up to 12 adults and six juveniles in June, 'presume locally bred'.

In 1980, the number of sites and the number of pairs were both the highest not only for just the eight-



year period during which the Panel has collected records, but also for over 150 years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	4	4	6	5	7	4	5	8
Pairs (minimum)	149	125	158	151	146	145	147	168
Pairs (maximum)	149	125	158	151	146	145	156	180
Young reared	115	64	142	68	14	92	99	101

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

69 sites: 10-77 pairs breeding, but, as usual, data incomplete.

Berkshire Three sites: (1) pair reared young (probably two); (2) heard early in breeding season; (3) heard from 16th July.

Cambridgeshire 13 sites: (1) pair and two juveniles on 18th May and 29th June; (2)-(13) heard.

Dorset One site: two pairs probably bred.

Essex One site: two pairs, one reared two young.

Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) pair probably bred; (2) pair.

Norfolk 31 sites: (1) two pairs nested; (2)-(31) present. 'Undoubtedly many pairs overlooked.'

Oxfordshire One site: pair from mid April.

Suffolk Ten sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared one young; (3) pair, seen carrying food; (4) five pairs; (5) two pairs; (6)-(10) pairs.

Sussex, West Three sites: (1) pair, three eggs during 13th-20th June; (2)(3) pairs in May.

Wiltshire Four sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair, nest found; (3) pair; (4) single.

1973 Hertfordshire Seven pairs present and probably bred.

1974 Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) three pairs probably bred; (2) pair probably bred.

1977 Hertfordshire One site: pair reared two young.

1978 Hertfordshire Two sites: (1) pair bred; (2) pair summered.

Excluding the main counties of Hampshire and Norfolk for which details are not available annually, totals have been as follows:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Pairs proved breeding	26	28	47	16	4	20	34	8
Pairs possibly breeding	90	67	77	109	27	34	81	45

It would not be unreasonable to add the county recorders' own past estimates of over 50 pairs in Hampshire and well over 30 pairs in Norfolk and guess that the total British population is around 150 pairs. A co-ordinated census, including liaison with landowners, farmers and keepers, could, however, reveal that even this is a serious underestimate.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Two sites: pair and single, perhaps only migrants.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair on 17th May, male on 18th May; (2) female on 15th June.

1979 Kent One site: up to three in May, last one on 1st June.

One pair hatched two young in Lincolnshire/south Humberside in 1979, the only published breeding record in the UK since 1956.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

At least 11 sites: 5-38 pairs breeding.

Angus One site: 'Usual or more than usual numbers—terrible breeding success', but only details are 38 on 11th May, one female on 1th June.

Highland One site: two pairs, with males incubating clutches of three and two in June.

County B Three sites: (1)(2) present in May-June; (3) one to ten 'calling agitatedly in misty conditions' in mid July.

County E One site: 'usual sightings . . . in eminently suitable breeding terrain and where bred in 1969' including 15 on 16th May and ten on 18th May; recorder comments that birders rarely try to prove breeding.

County F Two sites: (1) pair, male with two chicks about eight days old on 20th July; (2) pair throughout breeding season, 'a poor "Dotterel year"'.

County J One site: two pairs bred, two separate chicks on 6th July.

County K Unfortunately, the only information supplied to the county recorder was: 'Numbers have been very stable over recent years. Breeding slightly better than average in [one area] in 1980, but slightly poorer in [a second area].'

1973 Angus One site: four pairs, 'good breeding year'.

1978 County L One site: pair, two eggs, two young reared, first conclusive proof of breeding in the county.

1979 Grampian/Highland Extra details, from *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 25): number of young—20 (four juveniles) east Cairngorms on 9th August, 28 (five juveniles) west Cairngorms on 16th August.

It is difficult to interpret Dotterel observations—does a flock of 20 on a hilltop in May or June represent 20 pairs, ten pairs, or none because they are all migrants or non-breeders?—and even more difficult for the Panel to assess the situation when some observers supply only generalised statements (based on how many data?) rather than precise details of what was observed. Trends in peripheral areas may or may not reflect what is happening in the main area. It is, however, possible to show some apparent trends outside the main breeding area (asterisks indicate first-ever breeding records):

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Counties	1	1	3*	3	5	1*	3	3
Sites	1	1	7	4	7	7	4	6
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	3	3	4	5	1	1
Pairs possibly breeding	1	1	7	11	12	20	14	15

Temminck’s Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Five sites: 1-6 pairs breeding.

County A Two sites: (1) single singing and displaying on 11th June; (2) two singing on 28th May.

County B One site: four adults on 16th May, at least one nest found, later deserted, apparently after one egg had been removed; two adults with at least one chick on 18th July.

County D One single during 15th-17th June.

County E One site: single singing on 1st and 16th June.

1979 County A One site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 26) states: adult singing on 30th May.

1979 County B One site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 26) states: first on 23rd May, up to six individuals, bred successfully.

1979 County E One site: up to two present, one displaying, from 30th May to 16th June.

Despite disturbance by irresponsible birders and by egg-collectors, the Scottish population of this species seems to be expanding very slowly:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	1	2	1	2	3	3	4	5
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1
Pairs possibly breeding	2	3	2	1	6	6	6	6

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: one pair reared one young.

Scotland One site: pair reared one young, adult and chick during 16th-24th July, juvenile independent by 2nd August.

1979 Scotland One site: one nest with three eggs on 19th June; additional information not supplied to Panel, but published in *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 26); first seen 24th May, adult with three young on 4th July, two of these fledged about 25th July, another adult with two young which fledged about 10th August.

Successful breeding has now occurred for three successive years at this site. Those who know the location are requested to keep the information completely confidential and not to visit the area during May-July. It is now wardened, but nests are not searched for even by the wardens, to avoid disturbance.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Ten sites: 3-13 females breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) female and two young on 23rd June; (2) two pairs and third male on 23rd April.

Cornwall One site: male and two females through summer into July, chasing and display noted.

Essex One site: 12 males and one female at lek on 4th April, but none seen between 21st May and 24th August.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) female incubating four eggs, one disappeared, other three infertile, no male ever seen; (2) male on 6th May, female on 10th May.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) male and two females on 17th May, two on 28th June, ten males and one female on 5th July; (2) three males on 3rd July, one male on 4th July, one female on 25th July.

County D One site: pair displaying during June.

County E One site: female incubating four eggs, first nesting record for mainland Scotland.

1979 County D One site: two males and one female displaying during June.

Summering seems to be occurring at more sites, but breeding continues to be sporadic and, as always, difficult to prove:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	1	1	4	6	6	3	12	10
Pairs proved breeding	0	2	2	4	0	0	3	3
Max. number females breeding	8	12	26	17	16	4	22	13

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

11 sites: 52-77 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) 37 pairs in May, 'many' young in June, 'good season'; (2) eight pairs in May, nest with four eggs, pair with juveniles on 25th May, behaviour in May suggested that all had young; (3) two or three in early May, present late May.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: male occasionally displaying during 18th-26th May.

Norfolk Three sites: (1) 11 pairs, eight with young; (2) pair with two chicks; (3) pair displaying on 6th April.

Somerset One site: five to seven pairs on 28th April, three pairs on 16th May behaved as if young nearby, extremely agitated pair on 1st July suggested second attempt.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) three pairs reared six young; (2) up to ten during 6th-19th June.

Shetland One site: pair from 26th April to 28th July, hatched young, two thought to have fledged.

It was a successful year in the main area (the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk); elsewhere, there has been little change over the past eight years:

	1973	1971	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	8	9	9	12	10	12	12	9
Pairs proved breeding	4	6	8	8	5	10	17	7
Pairs possibly breeding	10	11	16	23	18	28	33	29

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Four sites: 7-12 pairs bred.

Caithness One site: pair in June.

Inverness-shire One site: five to seven pairs nested, first egg 8th May, three nests on 1st July, two clutches of four being incubated and one with three newly hatched chicks and one egg.

Ross-shire One site: singing in mid June, adult with young on 13th July, two pairs with young on 26th and 27th July, adult and probable juvenile in flight on 28th July, at least two and perhaps three pairs bred.

County D One site: single on 25th May.

1979 Inverness-shire Additional site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 29) states: (2) two on 23rd May and one on 28th May.

1979 Ross-shire One site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 29) states: adult on 21th June.



Although the number of sites was low, so the population very vulnerable, 1980 was the best-ever year for the number of breeding pairs:

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	5	3	3	5	3	4	7	3	4
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	1	2	1	2	4	2	7
Pairs possibly breeding	8	3	4	6	3	5	10	4	12

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Ten sites: 4-34 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: pair on 6th July.

Shetland Five sites: (1)-(5) total of 20-24 pairs probably bred.

County A One site: pair, one flying young on 2nd July.

County B One site: single on 25th May, pair by 2nd June, four on 7th June, usually three adults, at least one pair probably nested.

County E Two sites: (1) two or three pairs bred; (2) one pair bred.

Numbers have remained relatively static during the past eight years (Shetland data are not available for 1973):

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	5	9	9	4	7	10	13	10
Pairs proved breeding	2	2	18	1	20	22	13	4
Pairs possibly breeding	7	21	32	21	31	36	40	34

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Five sites: one pair laid two eggs, other singles probably unpaired or paired to Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*.

Essex One site: adult from 4th May to 20th July, appeared to be feeding young on 6th and 13th July, assumed to have bred with Black-headed Gull as no second Mediterranean Gull seen.

Hampshire One site: pair laid two eggs, nest washed away by high tides.

Lancashire One site: adult displaying in small colony of Black-headed Gulls on 13th June, joined by immature on 16th June, one or other present for another six days.

Suffolk One site: subadult held territory with Black-headed Gull from 9th April to 29th May.

County C One site: male holding territory in Black-headed Gull colony from 12th April to 31st May, unsuccessfully attempted copulation with Black-headed Gull on 5th May.

Not only is breeding becoming more regular, but the incidence of summering by individuals in colonies of Black-headed Gulls is also increasing:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1
Max. number pairs or singles	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5

The low number of Mediterranean Gulls, and their affinity for colonies of the common species, does, however, make the establishment of a regular breeding population very unlikely.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

12 sites: summering individuals only.

Cheshire One site: at colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, adult on 26th April, three adults on 8th May, adult from 14th to 23rd May, 'unlikely that breeding was attempted, but it must have been a possibility.'

Lincolnshire/south Humberside More summering than usual, mostly immatures, with one to 11 at 11 sites.

Pairs of Little Gulls laid eggs in Cambridgeshire/Norfolk in 1975, and in Norfolk and in North Yorkshire in 1978, but no young have yet hatched.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One site: up to three females, one laid infertile egg, no males.

Shetland One site, Fetlar: three females from January to 2nd May, two females to end of May, female from June to August, laid infertile egg on 2nd June, disappeared by 4th June, no sign of any male.

Breeding was annual on Fetlar during the nine years 1967-75, but there has been no male there for the past five.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Two sites: 0-2 pairs breeding.

Gloucestershire One site: pair in suitable habitat at end of May and early June, singing heard.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: single during 10th-16th May and 1st-2nd June, probably same bird in late May, second bird 1½ km away during 1st-2nd June.

The only recent confirmed breeding records were in Sussex in 1971, and in Avon, Somerset, Surrey and Sussex in 1977, but breeding almost certainly also occurred in Huntingdonshire in 1978.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

11 sites: 1-14 pairs breeding.

Grampian Four sites: (1) pair nested in nestbox, nine eggs laid, eight young hatched, probably seven young fledged; (2)-(4) singles singing for short periods.

Inverness-shire Six sites: (1) singing on 18th May, seven or eight on 25th May, two on 28th May, 'may have nested'; (2) two singing in May; (3)-(6) singles singing in May or June.

Lancashire One site: one singing during 11th to 19th June.

1973 Hertfordshire One site: pair bred in old orchard which was felled in 1974.

1978 County B One site: pair brought two young to lawns, presumed to have bred locally.

1979 Inverness-shire One site: no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 36) notes: three singing in June, one found dead on 19th July.

1979 Kent One site: one or two during 15th-21st May.

1979 Ross-shire One site: no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 36) notes: two singing in June.

1979 County B One site: pair brought three young to lawns, presumed to have bred locally.

The northerly bias continues, with almost all now in Scotland:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites in England	2	0	5	2	3	3	3	1
Sites in Scotland	1	5	5	5	14	18	4	10
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	3	1	7	4	1	1
Pairs possibly breeding	3	5	10	7	19	22	9	14

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Two sites: single singing males.

Inverness-shire One site: male of red-spotted race *L. s. svecica* singing in suitable breeding habitat on 15th June.

Nottinghamshire One site: male of white-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* singing and holding territory for six weeks, from early April to 12th May.

These are the first instances of singing males in suitable habitat for at least 13 years and are perhaps the first ever. The only breeding record concerns a female flushed from nest and eggs in Inverness-shire in 1968 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 524-525).

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Records not collected for 1980.

1973 Hampshire One site: pair reared two broods.

1974 Hampshire Six sites: (1)-(3) pairs reared two broods; (4)-(6) pairs, breeding not proved.

The Panel listed records during 1973-76 and continues to publish additions and corrections for those four years.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Four sites: probably four late/early migrants.

Cumbria One site: male singing on 6th May.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: single on 7th June.

County A Two sites: (1) single on 17th May; (2) single on 8th July.

1974 Kent One site: one or two daily throughout June.
1975 Lancashire Two sites: (1)(2) singles, on 26th May and 29th June.
1976 Kent Two sites: (1) two to five during 27th-31st July; (2) single on 29th July.
1979 Surrey One site: three (one suspected juvenile) on 8th July.

The colonisation of Britain by this fine thrush seems to be flagging:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	3	8	9	11	6	2	6	4
Pairs proved breeding	2	3	1	3	4	0	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	3	7	9	12	6	2	6	4

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

18 sites: 7-32 pairs breeding.

Banffshire Two sites: (1) male singing on 27th April and 8th June; (2) male singing on 27th April.

Cumbria One site: male singing on 1st June.

Inverness-shire Six sites: (1) seven males or pairs, two nests found, both failed, due to wet weather and predation by pine marten *Martes martes*; (2) pair with brood of five during 17th-23rd May; (3) fledged brood on 16th June; (4) pair nesting; (5) four singing males; (6) three singing males.

Kent Two sites: (1) male singing in April, male on 13th May, female with brood-patch on 22nd May, probably bred; (2) single on 2nd June.

Morayshire One site: single carrying food in suitable breeding habitat in June.

Ross-shire Four sites: (1) three or four singing males during April-June; (2) one or two pairs 'behaving as if nesting' at previous nesting site on 13th May; (3)(4) single singing males, on 28th April and 28th May.

Sutherland Two sites: (1) pair nested, but one adult and four young killed by cat; (2) at least one singing male on 22nd May.

1979 Sutherland One site, no details supplied to Panel but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 40) notes: one carrying food to presumed nest during 8th-10th May.

There was a very welcome resurgence in records in 1980, with the highest total since the all-time peaks in 1975:

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	?	11	27	25	10	10	12	5	18
Pairs proved breeding	12	4	3	13	3	2	3	2	7
Pairs possibly breeding	42	12	27	53	15	16	17	8	32

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

46 sites: 19-189 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire One site: male singing throughout year from 20th April, trapped and found to be one-year-old ringed in Hertfordshire in autumn 1979; seven juveniles caught and at least two more untrapped. First breeding record for county.

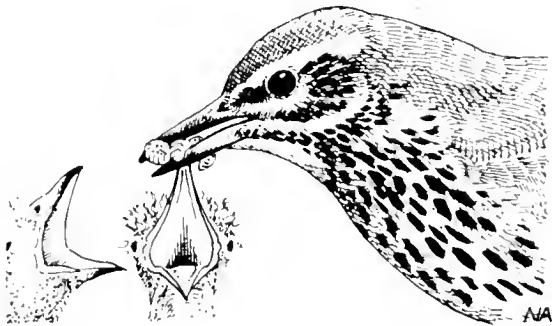
Cornwall Three sites: (1) at least one pair present all year, but breeding not proved; (2) one or possibly two during 8th April to 7th July; (3) single present until 8th June.

Devon Four sites: (1) resident, ten to 11 breeding pairs; (2) singing on 10th February, 9th March and 7th June; (3) singing on 9th March; (4) pair and unattached male during April-June, breeding proved, at least eight on 16th August.

Dorset Six sites: (1) nine pairs; (2) seven pairs; (3) three pairs; (4) pair; (5) two males during April-May; (6) male in April.

Hampshire One site: two pairs reared total of six young.

Hertfordshire Three sites: (1) pair reared two broods; (2) up to two singing throughout



year, one pair bred, outcome unknown; (3) one singing during March-April, single from 19th July to 22nd September, two broods in August.

Isle of Wight Four sites: (1) pair on 3rd June; (2)-(4) singles heard on one or two days in April, May or June.

Kent Nine sites: (1) one pair bred; (2)-(9) singing males: 71, 11, 3, 3, 2, and three singles.

Norfolk Nine sites: (1)-(9) singing males: 12, 8, 6, 2, 2, and four singles.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) pair reared four young; (2) pair; (3)-(5) singing males.

Worcestershire One site: singing male during 2nd-22nd March.

1979 Surrey One site: single during 13th May to 7th July.

1979 West Glamorgan One site: heard on 5th April, seen on 14th and 27th August.

The spectacular increase and spread, following initial colonisation of Kent in 1972, still continue, but seem to have slowed somewhat:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Counties	2	3	3	8	10	11	14	11
Pairs proved breeding	1	5	8	8	13	30	46	19
Pairs possibly breeding	11	16	75	80	153	171	163	189

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

14 sites: 2-29 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire One site: male singing during 12th April to 26th July, second during 6th-26th July.

Cornwall One site: male singing during 30th April to 23rd June.

Devon One site: male singing during 19th-25th April.

Dorset One site: male singing during 20th April to 4th May.

Kent One site: five singing males, two pairs feeding young.

Leicestershire One site: male singing during 15th-26th May.

Norfolk Five sites: (1) pair; (2)-(5) males singing: 8, 4, 2 and a single.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) male singing from 18th May, pair thought to have bred; (2) male singing during 27th April to 7th June, pair thought to have bred; (3) male singing during 25th April to 5th May, pair may have bred.

The run of good years is now extended to four:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	1	5	3	8	13	15	15	14
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	1	0	3	4	6	2
Pairs possibly breeding	13	8	3	9	26	28	30	29

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Nine sites: 2-59 pairs breeding.

Gloucestershire One site: male singing on 12th and 15th June.

Kent Two sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) male singing on 30th May.

Wiltshire One site: pair, proved breeding.

Worcestershire Two sites: (1) 'no change in main area'; (2) up to three singing during 30th May to 2nd July; recorder estimated 40-50 pairs probably breeding in county.

County B Two sites: (1) three males throughout breeding season; (2) male on 27th May.

County C One site: male singing on 2nd July.

1973 Gloucestershire One site: two pairs, rearing five and four young.

1979 Gloucestershire DELETION Site (3) in 1979 report actually referred to 1980 (see above).

Outside the main area, where 40-70 pairs have been estimated annually since 1973, numbers dropped back after two good years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	9	6	3	5	6	15	15	8
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	0	0	2	4	1	2
Pairs possibly breeding	15	7	5	5	11	15	23	12

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

At least 26 sites: estimated 177 pairs in the New Forest and 19-100 pairs breeding elsewhere.

Cornwall Three sites: (1) pair, nest, two fledged young seen; (2)(3) pairs each reared at least one young, perhaps a second pair at each site. First breeding records in county since 1940.

Devon Two sites: (1)(2) males, on 14th May and 19th June.

Dorset '35 pairs probably bred.'

Hampshire Six sites: (1) in New Forest, 53 pairs located in seven sample areas covering 30-40% of suitable habitat; (2) three pairs, at least two bred successfully; (3) two pairs and three extra males, male feeding young on 11th May, but fire on 12th May devastated area; (4) pair and extra male, failed due to fires; (5) pair, failed due to fires; (6) male in April.

Isle of Wight Two sites: (1) single on 15th and 17th May; (2) single on 1st June.

Surrey 11 sites: (1)-(11) total of 12 pairs proved breeding, number of pairs at each site: 10-12, 9-11, 3-5, 2-3, 2-3, five singles and one probable pair.

Sussex, West One site: two pairs and one or two extra males, young heard on 5th July.

1973 Hampshire New Forest total 'probably over 200 pairs' (not 'at least 100 pairs').

Numbers in the New Forest and elsewhere had, by spring 1980, recovered from the 1978/79 winter, with totals in excess of those in spring 1978.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

30 sites: 7-78 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Three sites: (1) six singing males, two nests, both unsuccessful; (2) male singing on 19th April; (3) male singing in May.

Buckinghamshire Three sites: (1) total of 17 singing males; (2) singing male; (3) male from late January until at least 19th April, when singing.

Devon One site: female with a brood patch on 15th April.

Dorset One site: single on 15th July.

Essex Two sites: (1) pair with three young during 5th-26th July, one or two in August and September; (2) male singing on 17th May, pair 7th June, male on 21st June.

Gloucestershire One site: male and female on 6th-7th June, male on 10th June, two males on 14 June.

Gwent One site: up to two males singing during 13th March to 16th July.

Hampshire Six sites: total of nine singing males, with one pair breeding successfully.

Kent Six sites: (1) 20 singing males, seven paired, two nest-building; (2) two singing males; (3) pair on 21th May; (4)(5) singing males, on 14th and 18th-29th May; (6) single trapped 26th April.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: singing male from mid April to mid May.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) two males and female, three juveniles seen; (2) 'pair thought to have bred'; (3) two pairs in April; (4) two males singing regularly until 28th June; (5) singing male on 7th May.

1974 Gwent Three sites: (1)(2) males singing, on 2nd March and 3rd April; (3) one found dead on 21st April.

1974 Hampshire Additional site: (3) pair, proved breeding but outcome unknown.

1975 Huntingdonshire One site: single on 17th March and 13th April.

1978 Surrey One site: male trapped on 26th May.

1979 Berkshire Additional information: nest, eggs laid, unsuccessful.

1979 Greater Manchester One site: single on 8th March, singing male on 27th April.

1979 Kent Extra site: (1) two on 23rd May.



After a decline during 1976-78, it is pleasing to have two successive good years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	5	13	31	14	12	7	25	30
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	4	4	2	1	9	7
Pairs possibly breeding	18	37	122	27	31	11	73	78

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

17 sites: 2-28 pairs breeding.

Cumbria One site: male singing during 16th-18th June.

Derbyshire One site: single calling on 14th August.

Devon One site: two on 2nd July, probably male and female, possibly male and juvenile.

Kent Nine sites: (1) up to three during 20th-31st May; (2) up to two during 22nd May to 8th June; (3) up to two during 17th May to 3rd July; (4) male on 19th May; (5) male singing on 18th May; (6) male singing in late May, up to three in mid May and one in early August, perhaps all migrants; (7) male singing on 30th May; (8) female, with no brood-patch, trapped on 7th June; (9) two on 15th May, male singing on 15th-16th May about 1 km distant.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: male singing on 29th June.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) up to 12 males singing, pair at nest on 25th May, nine adults and three juveniles on 27th July; (2) pair bred; (3) pair probably bred.

County D One site: male singing from 12th June, possible female present in early July.

1977 Glamorgan, South CORRECTION Male on 20th July, not 20th June.

1979 Glamorgan, West One site: male singing on 15th May.

Although breeding was not proved in Kent, it was the fifth successive good year for this species:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	2	3	4	11	16	14	17	17
Pairs proved breeding	1	2	2	7	6	7	3	2
Pairs possibly breeding	8	4	7	23	21	28	30	28

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

32 sites: 26-36 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire One site: pair bred, first in county since 1971.

Essex One site: pair bred successfully.

Gwent Two sites: (1)(2) singles, during 2nd-9th June and on 17th June.

Hampshire Three sites: (1)-(3) pairs bred, two rearing young.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Three sites: (1) male on 23rd, 24th and 31st May, pair attempting coition on 1st June; (2)(3) males, on 30th May and 1st June.

Norfolk Six sites: (1)(2) pairs each reared three young; (3) pair reared two young; (4) pair failed to rear young; (5) pair; (6) male held territory for two weeks.

Suffolk 16 sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred, one rearing four young; (3) three pairs failed to rear any young, one pair comprised male Woodchat Shrike *L. senator* and female Red-backed; (4)-(13) pairs bred, five of them rearing 6, 5, 4, 3-5 and 2 young; (14) pair present; (15) female on 31st May, male on 11th June; (16) female on 21st July.

1977 Kent One site: female during 14th-24th July, male on 15th-16th July, 'probably pair that failed in the near vicinity'.

1979 Aberdeenshire Three sites, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 45) notes: (1) pair bred, three recently fledged young on 13th July; (2)(3) males.

1979 Angus One site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 45) notes: male on 24th June.

1979 Inverness-shire Two sites, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 45) notes: (1) male in song on 3rd June, female nearby on 4th July; (2) male on 16th June.

1979 Norfolk Six sites, but unknown overlap with three of the four sites noted last year:

(1)-(4) pairs reared 5, 4, 4, and 3 young; (5) two pairs reared total of 6 young; (6) pair bred, nest found, outcome unknown.

1979 Perth One site, no details supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 45) notes: male on 5th June.

Records were less widespread in Britain than during 1977-79.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Counties	7	8	7	5	13	11	10	7
Pairs proved breeding	27	30	51	3	48	13	14	26
Pairs possibly breeding	13	52	56	25	61	37	52	36

We greatly welcome the increased detail supplied to us from the species' main area.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

One site: male paired with female Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*.

Suffolk One site: male paired with female Red-backed Shrike, but failed to rear young.

This potential colonist unfortunately did not find a mate of its own species.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Three sites: presence and singing only, 0-4 pairs breeding.

Sutherland One site: male singing on 4th June, not found on 5th.

County A Two sites: (1) two males, three females, song heard on 5th May, male singing on 17th May; (2) single on 25th May.

Are we perhaps seeing the first signs of colonisation by this attractive finch?:

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	3
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1

Serín *Serinus serinus*

One site: 0-1 pair breeding.

Devon One site: male singing and displaying during 3rd-24th July.

It is astonishing that this species has still not succeeded in establishing a firm base on this side of the English Channel. The published records do not encourage any expectation of imminent colonisation:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Pairs possibly breeding	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	1

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

One site: one pair breeding.

Scotland One site: pair nested, female carrying food, at least one male.

1979 Scotland Five sites: the data supplied to the Panel last year are incomplete; *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 18-19) notes: (1) first males in early June, seven or more males and ten or more females in June-July, flying young by 7th July, good numbers by 14th July, one male considered to be polygynous with four females; (2) female with young in early July and on 27th

July; (3) male singing on 3rd June; (4) male on 10th June; (5) female on 7th July.

This splendid addition to our breeding avifauna hung on for a fourth year:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	0	1	0	0	6	3	5	1
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	2	2	11	1
Pairs possibly breeding	0	1	0	0	16	6	14	1

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Four sites: 4-10 pairs breeding.

Inverness-shire/Aberdeenshire/Banffshire Four sites: (1)(2) total of five males and three females, three pairs proved breeding, probably at least 12 young reared; (3) pair and two or three singing males on 26th May; (4) pair on 27th June, male on 3rd July, and juvenile on 11th September.

1979 Central Highlands Two sites, data not supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 19) notes: (1) main site, at least four pairs nested, good season, 14 or more young in six groups on 8th August; (2) three or four males and three or more females in nearby area, young seen on 7th August.

1979 Inverness-shire Six sites, data not supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 19) notes: (1) male on 6th May, female on 20th May; (2) one or more males singing on 4th June; (3) pair on 3rd June; (4)-(6) single males.

1979 Ross-shire One site, data not supplied to Panel, but *Scottish Bird Report* (1979: 19) notes: pair nested successfully.

It is very pleasing to have been supplied with very full details for the main area by several observers this year, in contrast to the vague summaries which have sometimes been all we have received. In consequence, the data summarised below are probably of variable reliability and some will be underestimates:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Sites	5	7	13	1	5	3	11	1
Pairs proved breeding	6	2	2	4	4	3	6	4
Pairs possibly breeding	11	13	20	7	15	6	18	10

Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus*

Outside Devon, 21 sites: 6-26 pairs breeding.

Buckinghamshire One site: up to two males singing and one female from March to August.

Cornwall Five sites: (1)-(3) pairs bred; (4)(5) singing males.

Devon 'Population thought to be in the range 120 to 150 pairs', but 'number recorded is probably only about a third of the total': 15 pairs proved breeding, another 25 probably breeding and another four possibly breeding; very full details supplied to Panel.

Dorset No breeding records, and only two migrants.

Hampshire One site: male singing on two dates in July.

Huntingdonshire One site: male on 22nd July.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: male during 16th-25th June.

Somerset Six sites: (1) two males singing, one pair bred; (2) pair bred; (3) three males



singing, one pair probably bred; (4) male singing during May-August; (5)(6) male singing in June.

Surrey Two sites: (1) one or two pairs; (2) single on 6th July.

Oxfordshire No records.

Sussex, East Two sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) male all year.

Sussex, West One site: male on 24th April.

County A One site: male singing throughout the summer until 12th August, 'reputed to have been accompanied by a female in June'.

This is the first year that this species has featured in our report, its addition being at the request of the NCC and of the county recorders in several of the counties from which it seems to be disappearing. The total of six to 26 pairs breeding is based, as with all figures in these reports, on those actually observed during the year; the county recorders' estimates quoted by Humphrey Sitters (*Brit. Birds* 75: 106, table 1) totalled 24-40 pairs outside Devon.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Fifty years ago . . .

'BLACK-TAILED GODWITS IN DEVON IN JANUARY. On 28th January 1932, when walking down the Exe estuary from Topsham to Starcross, I flushed two Godwits from a shallow freshwater pool on an adjoining marsh. I naturally thought them to be Bar-tailed, which are occasionally seen here in the winter. Through my glasses, however, I was astonished to see the white wing-bars, white upper tail-coverts, black tail and trailing legs, which proved them to be Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa t. limosa*). R. M. BYNE. (*Brit. Birds* 25: 338, April 1932)

Mystery photographs

64 Small plovers can be found virtually anywhere near water in autumn. Adults are usually easy to identify, but in juvenile plumage they can provoke some discussion. On this bird, at least, the complete white collar, poor supercilium and restricted amount of white on the forehead immediately rule out the unlikely possibility of either Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* or Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*. This leaves only the three commoner small plovers: Ringed *C. hiaticula*, Little Ringed *C. dubius* and Kentish *C. alexandrinus*, and the Nearctic Semipalmated Plover *C. semipalmatus* which is very similar to Ringed. The Kentish Plover is eliminated on the same last two features as were the sand plovers, and also by the broad, nearly complete, breast band.

Of the remaining possibilities, two—Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers—frequently occur together and demand close scrutiny, although they are clearly different when examined in detail. This mystery bird (plate 32, repeated here as plate 56) is a juvenile Little Ringed Plover in worn plumage, photographed in Norfolk in August 1979 by Dr R. J. Chandler; it is here compared with a juvenile Ringed Plover photographed at the same time and place (plate 57).

The two birds differ noticeably. Perhaps the best distinctions of the Little



56 & 57. Top, juvenile Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*; bottom, juvenile Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*; both Norfolk, August 1979 (R. J. Chandler)

Ringed Plover are the absence of an obvious supercilium (this is reduced to a diffuse paler patch on the forehead); thin all-black bill; a clear blackish area on the lores; and, at close range, the presence of an incomplete but clear pale yellowish orbital ring. In combination, these features give a totally distinctive facial pattern to a juvenile Little Ringed Plover, so that, given views like this, it is unnecessary to wait for flight views to note the lack of a wing-bar, or hear its distinctive 'piu' call note, before making a firm identification.

In the field, their typically faster feeding action may draw attention to Little Ringed Plovers. They may also appear higher off the ground and crouch less than Ringed Plovers; the principal reason for this is that their legs are noticeably less flexed. They usually look slimmer and more attenuated at the rear end.

A. J. PRATER



58. Mystery photograph 65. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Piracy by Cormorant On 17th March 1979, from the pier at Ayr, Strathclyde, I watched an approaching fishing boat which was being followed by a large flock of gulls *Larus*, Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* and about 25 Gannets *Sula bassana*, all of which were feeding on the fish offal being thrown overboard. The gulls and Kittiwakes fed from the water surface, whereas the Gannets were diving into the sea close behind the boat. Near the harbour entrance, a Gannet surfaced with a large piece of offal which it was unable to swallow. It took off and, as it started to fly out to sea, an adult Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* appeared and started to pursue it. The Cormorant was easily able to keep up with the Gannet and frequently attempted to force it to drop the offal; at one point, it momentarily got hold of the Gannet's wing-tip, which resulted in the Gannet falling to within 10m of the surface. The pursuit continued for about ten minutes, by which time the two birds were at least 3km out to sea and had been joined by two Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus*. Eventually, the Gannet was forced to drop the offal and all four birds dropped into the sea after it. I was unable to see which one got the food, although the Cormorant reached the water first.



IAIN H. LEACH

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Dr Bryan Nelson has commented that incidents such as this occur but rarely, so that the details recorded by Iain Leach, particularly the Cormorant's attempt to capsize the Gannet, are both interesting and useful. Eds

Grey Heron dunking and swallowing large rat C. G. Jones's letter (*Brit. Birds* 72: 189-190) on birds, including Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, dunking food recalled the following. At about 11.00 GMT on 26th November 1975, at Winterset Reservoir, South Yorkshire, I saw an adult Grey Heron standing at the muddy water margin, holding a large common rat *Rattus norvegicus* by the head; from nose to root of tail, the rat was about the length of the heron's head and bill. For at least ten minutes, the heron repeatedly dunked its victim in the water; the rat never moved, and seemed dead. When three Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* swam close and seemed to take an interest, the heron walked away a metre or so, carrying the rat; when the swans resumed normal feeding and preening, the heron started dunking again. The heron tried four times to swallow its prey, holding up its head so that the rat was entirely within its beak (and much must have been within its throat), but each time it bent down and let the rat out; dunking continued between each attempt. Eventually, the heron beat the rat on the ground, then resumed dunking; the fifth, successful, attempt to swallow the rat followed.

SIMON BANKS

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Greylag Geese from 5,000 years ago Lydekker (1891, *Ibis* 3: 381-410) reported subfossil Greylag Goose *Anser anser* from Norfolk, and Walker (1868, *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* 4: 388) reported a humerus of this species from Cambridgeshire peat. Among bones stored in the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, and kindly made available by Dr C. L. Forbes and R. Long, I have identified 26 specimens representing six individuals; all came from peat from Burwell Fen, Cambridgeshire, dated to pollen zone VII. Student's t-tests of four humeri, five ulnae, three femora and four tibiotarsi show no significant differences in length from those of four recent skeletons made available by C. S. Cowles. Lack (1971, *Evolution Illustrated by Wildlife*) hazarded a guess that Greylag Geese 'have remained unchanged in size and proportions for between 1 and 10 million years'. If, as Gould (1966, *Biol. Rev.* 11: 587-640) and others considered, lengths of limb bones are proportional to overall size, then my observations suggest that Greylag Geese may have remained more or less unchanged for at least 5,000 years.

E. MARJORIE NORTHCOTE

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Short-eared Owl eating prey in flight On 14th January 1979, at Chevington, Northumberland, a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* which had just killed prey was challenged by a second Short-eared Owl. The two spiralled skywards in tight, jerky ellipses until, at a considerable height, the aggressor dropped away; the owl with prey then soared high and fed on the wing, lifting the prey several times to its beak (in the manner of Hobby *Falco subbuteo*); a piece of flesh or fur fell to earth. Eventually, it transferred the whole prey to its bill, where it dangled precariously for a few seconds before being gulped down in one by the still-soaring owl.

MIKE HENRY

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Feeding behaviour of White-tailed Plover In their account of the first occurrence of the White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 70: 465-471), A. R. Dean, J. E. Fortey and E. G. Phillips mentioned two types of feeding behaviour: the lapwing *Vanellus* method of a few steps followed by a stoop-and-peck; and deep-wading for aquatic larvae, where items are picked off the surface or, occasionally, taken deeper with head immersed. At Khartoum, Sudan, I have seen 'foot-pattering' modifications of both methods which seem unrecorded in the literature.

Lapwing-type feeding is typical in wet ground and shallow water. Foot-pattering has been seen in shallow muddy water, usually by lone feeders: pausing and stretching its body forward somewhat, the plover puts one foot forward and pats the mud under the water four to six times, then stoops to inspect the surface, often picking items from the water before walking forward a few steps and repeating the procedure, working through the shallow parts of a pool. The movement of the outstretched foot is almost a trembling pat, similar to that of *Charadrius* plovers on wet surfaces, but heavier and more deliberate (but less so than the 'paddling' of gulls *Larus*). Success seems high: two-thirds to three-quarters of foot-pattering sessions are followed by picking one to three items from the surface. At Khartoum, deep-wading is relatively infrequent, probably reflecting the comparative rarity of appropriate water depth in the species' preferred habitat (water surrounded by open cover). Most deep-wading seems to be no more than a deep-water version of the lapwing method. On several occasions when the legs were not completely immersed, I have also detected foot-pattering during deep-wading; when the whole of the legs are immersed, the attitude of the pausing bird sometimes also suggests foot-pattering, which I suspect often accompanies deep-wading.

In winter, in deep water, where a stream of sewage effluent runs through the Sunt Forest, White-tailed Plovers regularly form feeding associations with Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*. A large group of actively feeding stilts soon attracts the plovers, and also Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis*, which are well known for feeding associations with other waders (*Brit. Birds* 68: 294-295). The last two tend to feed around the periphery. On these occasions, deep-wading by the plovers tends to differ, being more an active striding about the water and picking of items from the surface: resembling the stilts, but lacking their speed and elegance. From the rate of picking at the surface, feeding on these occasions is more productive than when alone: it would seem that the plovers are taking food stirred up by the stilts' feeding activity. This is confirmed if all birds are flushed: the stilts normally fly elsewhere to feed; the plovers return, but, without the stilts, revert back to their normal, and clearly less productive, deep-water version of the lapwing technique.

ANTONY PETTET

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Hind claw of Pied Wheatear I noticed that the hind claws of the first-winter male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* in Co. Cork in November 1980 seemed shorter than those of common European Wheatears *O. oenanthe*. The Pied Wheatear is said to tend to perch on trees and bushes

more often than the average Wheatear. Perhaps its shorter hind claws reflect this tree-perching habit: the Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* also has shorter hind claws than the Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*.

ERIC DEMPSEY

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P. R. Colston has examined skins at the British Museum (Natural History) on our behalf and has commented as follows: 'Mr Dempsey is quite right: *O. pleschanka* has a slightly shorter hind claw, of 5 mm, as against a thicker and longer 7 mm for *O. oenanthe*. Pied is, of course, a slighter bird in build and size. All the Pied Wheatears that I have seen (in Kenya) have been perched on tops of small thorn trees and have behaved rather like Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra*—quickly returning from forays to the ground.' EDS

The Wandlebury warbler What was generally agreed to be a singing Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* was present at Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire, from 16th June to at least 20th July 1980. During its stay, it was watched by several hundred observers. One of a series of photographs taken by J. Miller in early July (plate 59), however, apparently clearly shows the wing structure of a Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*. On Icterine, the extension of the primaries beyond the tertials is about the same length as the exposed tertials (measured from the rearmost extension of the scapulars to the tip of the longest tertial), whereas on Melodious it is about half the length. Judging from numerous published photographs, this difference is constant, as would be expected, since it results from the entirely different wing-formulae of the two species. Intrigued by this puzzle, we later visited the site and obtained good views at close range, and were satisfied that the wing structure was correctly portrayed in the photograph; this was also the conclusion of the great majority of observers who examined this feature critically. The notes of at least three other observers, however, record long, Icterine-like wings, which 'extended well down the tail' or 'covered the uppertail-coverts'. This discrepancy is inexplicable, but their method of judging the wing length is arguably less reliable than that of comparing the relative exposed tertials/primary projection lengths. Leg colour was noted by the majority of observers as pale flesh to brown (suggesting Melodious), but some noted blue-grey legs (suggesting Icterine): the well-known effect of different lighting conditions on bare-part colours would explain at least some of this variation. The bird showed an obvious pale wing-panel (formed by pale fringes on the tertials and secondaries, discernible in plate 59) which, according to most literature, is diagnostic of Icterine. Some Melodious Warblers, however, perhaps especially fresh-plumaged adults, do show a pale wing-panel, and, although it is probably never as prominent and well-defined as that on Icterine, it can be an obvious—and potentially misleading—feature. Plates 437 and 438 in *Collins Bird Guide* (1980), and *British Birds* 57: plates 43a and 43b, illustrate well both the wing-structure difference and the prominent wing-panel on some Melodious Warblers. Fortunately, R. Bunten had obtained an excellent tape-recording of the song, which was clearly that of an Icterine Warbler, containing examples of the strident, repetitive phrasing, and mimicry, and even occasional inclusion of the discordant, nasal 'zneer' note which is a particularly diagnostic component of an Icterine's song. To us, however, it was not the usually loud, highly strident



59 & 60. 'The Wandlebury warbler', identified as Icterine *Hippolais icterina* or perhaps Icterine \times Melodious *H. polyglotta* hybrid, Cambridgeshire, July 1980 (John Miller)

and repetitive song (including very frequent use of the discordant nasal notes) which is typical of the many Icterines which we have heard in northern Europe. Except perhaps for one or two phrases, however, the song was quite unlike a Melodious Warbler's, which is a comparatively featureless ramble, reminiscent of both *Sylvia* and *Acrocephalus* warblers. Ron Kettle of the British Library of Wildlife Sounds informed me that both Patrick Sellar and Claude Chappuis agreed that it was an Icterine's song, the latter adding that it was 'the typical song, but not the full song' of the species. A copy of the recording is at BLOWS, reference number 5197. It was hoped that an appeal (*Brit. Birds* 75: 592) would produce other relevant photographs, but, despite a good response, none clearly showed the wing structure. In view of the diagnostic song, the best conclusion is that it was indeed an Icterine Warbler, but one which, at least to the majority of observers and in one photograph, showed an atypical wing structure. The possibility that it was a hybrid Icterine \times Melodious Warbler, however, might tenuously be suggested: a mixed pair (male Melodious and female Icterine) raised two young from a clutch of five eggs in Côte d'Or, France, in 1980, the second instance of a mixed pair in a study of *Hippolais* warblers during 1962-80 in which 80 pure pairs were also found (Dr Camille Ferry, 1981, *Le Bièvre* 3: 100-101).

In addition to those named above, we thank Peter Conder, P. Hilliard, T. P. Inskipp, C. Kirtland, R. C. Mansfield, Dr J. C. A. Rathmell, N. R. Rogers, J. Smith and Dr D. R. C. Willcox for supplying discussion, notes, photographs or tape recordings. Special thanks are due to Bill Clark, warden of Wandlebury, for tolerating the invasion of his well-managed reserve: it is regrettable that a few observers quite unnecessarily disturbed breeding habitats in their pursuit of what, with a little patience, was an easily observable bird.

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Do Willow Warblers migrate in family groups? On 28th August 1978, at Dungeness, Kent, three first-year Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* were trapped together in the same net, each bearing strands of wool entwined round and embedded into the feet. The wool from each was of the same texture and colour, and had cut deeply into the flesh, indicating that it had become entangled round the feet at an early age (such injuries occur when fabrics incorporated into the nest by the adults become wrapped around the growing parts of nestlings). The occurrence of three birds together showing identical symptoms in an autumn when over 400 of the same species were trapped free of such an impediment is beyond coincidence. The possibility that they were from a local brood seems unlikely: only two pairs of Willow Warblers bred at Dungeness in 1978, and most, probably all, of their offspring were ringed soon after fledging. These three were part of an overnight arrival of 75 Willow Warblers and the incident poses the intriguing question: was a brood migrating as a group involved?

NICK RIDDIFORD
The Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, by Lerwick, Shetland

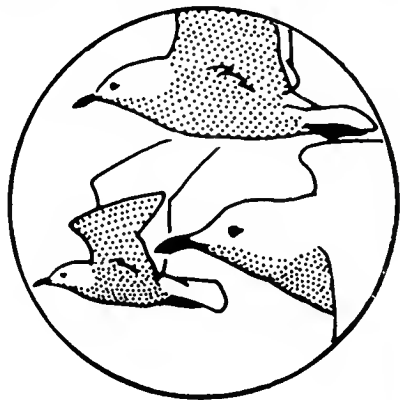
Dr C. H. Fry has commented: 'This provides further circumstantial evidence of a phenomenon that, if true, has considerable biological implications. Significantly, consecutive-numbered Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, ringed in Europe, have been controlled together in Senegal.' It would be most useful to have further ringing evidence. Eds

Golden Orioles feeding on the ground Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* feed on the ground in circumstances other than special ones to which migrants may be exposed (*Brit. Birds* 73: 265). On 26th June 1980, northeast of Halbtorn, Burgenland, Austria, I observed a pair of orioles patrolling from tree to tree along a road bordered with acacias *Robinia pseudoacacia*. On two occasions, the female stopped midway between two trees, hovered for one or two seconds, and then dived into the tall grass at the road's shoulder; she emerged immediately, but I could not see if she was carrying any food items.

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Announcements

Gulls: a guide to identification It is not too late to obtain this new book by P. J. Grant at the special prepublication price to *BB* readers of £10.60 instead of the normal £12.00 (see details on pages 137-138 in March issue).



French Rare Birds Committee The Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques in France, which publishes *Alauda*, has made itself responsible for the setting-up of a French Rare Birds Committee, which is already functioning. It will be run in a similar manner to that in Britain, an annual report with observers' names appearing each year in *Alauda*. Records for 1981 will be the first to be considered in this way, although observations for past years will also be very much welcomed for inclusion in a publication bringing records up to date. Any relevant observations made by British ornithologists in France will be gratefully received by J. F. Dejonghe and Tony Williams, Coordinateurs, French Rare Birds Committee, 46 rue d'Ulm, (E.N.S.), 75230 Paris, Cedex 05, France.

Sunbird Holidays *BB* subscribers are entitled to a 5% discount on all SUNBIRD HOLIDAYS (see *Brit Birds* 75, 97). This special arrangement also helps *BB* financially. Write for free brochure, from Sunbird Holidays, Executive Travel (Holidays) Ltd, 2 Lower Sloane Street, London SW1W 8BJ.



Request

Rookery damage in gales Observations concerning damage to the nests of Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* are requested (e.g. nest loss, chick mortality). Any counts before and after the gales of 25th/26th April 1981 would be especially welcome; counts for previous years or any relevant ones in 1982 would also be appreciated. Details, which will be acknowledged, should be sent to Dr S. C. Nichols, Glebe Farm, Willey, Rugby CV23 0SH.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

North Sea Gashawk: competition results

We asked for the most apt scientific name for a North Sea Gashawk observed by Ken Osborne (*Guardian*, 30th June 1981; *Brit Birds* 71: 103). We had a small number of entries—clearly inventiveness in Latin proved a somewhat daunting task. Although we did not ask for notes, we received several describing this species and its most unnatural history. One note even had a coloured illustration. Nevertheless, we have not allowed these notes to influence our decision concerning the best name. Most authors used binomials, but one turned back to pre-Linnaean days and used four; surprisingly, only two ventured into trinomials. Ken G. Spencer suggested that the bird had been described already and gave the author's name La Ptomaine. *Accipiter* was regularly used for the genus and *flatulensis* to denote the species. Those who used recognised scientific names were at a disadvantage and, since the English name was a spoof, we felt that those who had corrupted the Latin (as have many authors of genuine birds' names) should not be barred from the competition. In the end we came to the conclusion that the most apt—and most corrupt—effort came from Rev. C. F. Carter of Oswestry, who coined the name *Butaneo combustigaster*. He also came up with *Halitosis eructatus*—but we let that pass! Among the promising entries were *Aroma borealis* from Dave Carstairs, but surely this is too sweet a zephyr for our gaseous creature? Miss Winifred Flower's reasoning for her *Accipiter chaoticus*, closely allied to Montgolfier's Gashawk, was nicely erudite. Finally, two or three notes on the Gashawk's ecology: the Reverend Carter tells us that the North Sea Gashawk 'was deliberately bred and introduced to oil-drilling platforms to discourage migrants which were causing bird strikes to their attendant helicopters. Mr A. W. B***, when Secretary for Energy, took a keen interest in this project and himself provided the hot air which propelled earliest specimens . . .' Both he and Martin Coath considered that it anaesthetises its prey, but the latter points out that the Gas-masked Shrike always escapes. Martin Coath also tells us the East Anglian race, *bactonensis*, kills

its prey by suffocation . . . A small prize goes to Mr Carter. (Contributed by Peter Conder)

Bucks Bird Report We welcome the appearance of the *Buckinghamshire Bird Report* for 1980—the first ever for Buckinghamshire alone and, hopefully, the first of a long line. Its compilers and publishers, the Buckinghamshire Bird Club, are to be congratulated, having themselves been in existence for only a year. The report costs £2.00 to non-members and is available post free from Mrs E. A. Knight, 319 Bath Road, Cippenham, Slough, Buckinghamshire.

Ibises and condors One of the rarest birds in the world, the Japanese Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*, can no longer be seen in the wild: the last five have been caught in rocket nets on Sado Island in Japan and are now in a specially constructed aviary there at the Toki Centre. Using techniques developed by the International Crane Foundation, which have worked well with other ibis species, scientists hope to start a captive breeding programme in a last-ditch effort to save the species. Meanwhile, in California, final all-round approval has been given to trap five California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus*: two will be fitted with radio transmitters and released for tracking purposes and the other three, which will be immature non-breeders, will be used (along with one already in captivity) for the still somewhat controversial captive breeding programme. Following the unfortunate death of one young bird in 1981, the only other youngster in a nest was reared successfully. Only two other wild pairs are known—one of which spent 1981 continuing to rear the young bird fledged in 1980; the other pair did not breed last year, possibly because the female is still immature. The latest estimate is of only 30 birds in the wild.

Eggers in Canada One of the most exciting events in Canada in 1980 was the discovery of the first (possibly successful) breeding on the mainland of Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*: there were three nests. In 1981, there were again three nests, but no young were reared: two failed, due (almost certainly) to natural

causes, and the third was robbed, probably by egg-collectors. This third pair relaid, but their single egg disappeared, this time probably due to predation. There were apparently problems with too many birders, and protection was obviously difficult for the single warden at the site—but let's hope things go better for the birds if they come back this year. It is interesting—and a little sad—that the Canadians, knowing about the 'British disease' of egg-collecting, thought that British collectors might have been involved and approached the RSPB with a request for them to keep their eyes open . . .

Statistics meeting The Biometric Society and the British Ecological Society announce a one-day meeting of the Mathematical Ecology Group on 'Statistics in ornithology' on Tuesday 4th May 1982 in the lecture hall of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Cromwell Road, South Kensington, starting at 11 a.m. About ten speakers will include statisticians and biologists; a number of topics will be covered and in two of the three main sessions of the day the talks will fall under the general headings of 'capture-recapture methods' and 'census methods'. The meeting is being organised by Dr J. T. Morgan and Dr Philip M. North of the Mathematical Institute, the University of Kent at Canterbury. Collaborative work with the BTO has been done there for a

number of years and a project involving statistical examination of British bird observatories' data is currently in hand.

Heathland Interest Register This new register, which aims to draw together all those with management or research interests in all types of heath, dune heath and moor, has been drawn to our attention by its compiler, John Tucker of 1 Sutton Park Grove, Foley Park, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 6LP. He would be glad to hear from you if you are interested or can contribute—or if you can help with material for the heathland bibliography he is also compiling. The first issue of the *Register* should appear in spring 1982.

Those names again Good misprints spotted recently include Wopper Swan, Song Thrust, Woodcock and Bagle Owl—but surely the Gold Medal for 1981 must go to the following in the *Huntingdonshire Report*: 'Nighjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*—Accidental visitor. Former breeder. A recently killed bird on the road at St Ives on 18th December. This is probably the first British record for December.' Finally, not a bird name, but we rather liked a note received from Jeffery Boswall of the BBC Natural History Unit telling us of recent sound recordings for the BBC archive of nesting Kittiwakes on Skomer—made by Mr Cliff Voice!

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to January unless otherwise stated.

After the ice and snow in December, temperatures began to recover at the turn of the year, when warmer air arrived from the southwest, but, again, an anticyclone to the north began to dominate and, by 6th, very cold easterlies covered the country. On 8th, a





Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla*, too, were reported visiting gardens and moving on the English east coast, but **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were few and far between. A late record during the winter's hard weather was a **Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* on 8th December on the Isle of Man, the first record for the island.

Wildfowl

During the freeze, all but the largest inland reservoirs were iced over for more than a week and, consequently, most of the ducks moved out. A flock of 13 **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* stayed briefly at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) on 9th. Very large numbers of **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* collected in the southwest and also on Breydon Water (Norfolk). At Minsmere (Suffolk), eight **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* were present on 15th. There were a few scattered reports of **Smews** *Mergus albellus* inland, but most remained near the coast, 13 being counted at Benacre (Suffolk) and five at the Weaver Bend (Cheshire). Nearby at Gayton Sands (Cheshire and Merseyside), **Pintail** *Anas acuta* numbers reached 7,000 on 30th. Few rarities were reported: a duck **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was expertly identified off-shore at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) and **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* were still being seen at Hayle (Cornwall) and a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* near Kingsbridge (Devon). The most impressive collection of geese occurred on the Lancashire Mosses with a record 36,580 **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* being counted on 22nd, representing over a third of the world's population; amongst them were 30 **White-fronted Geese** *A. albifrons*, 20 **Barnacle Geese** *Branta leucopsis* and 18 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis*. The latter species was also in good numbers in the southeast, with flocks of 325 in Norfolk and 80 in Suffolk. A **Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* of the race *nigricans* was seen at Boyton (Suffolk) on 2nd.

depression moved in across the south, bringing heavy snowfalls, especially in Wales. Temperatures remained very low, dropping to -20°C in many places overnight, until 16th, when the high pressure declined and depressions moved in from the Atlantic, with winds from the south and west bringing a rapid thaw. These more normal conditions remained until the end of the month.

Passerines

The effects of the severe frosts on the resident species will not become apparent until the breeding censuses are made this spring, but already there have been disturbing reports of 50 **Wrens** *Troglodytes troglodytes* found dead in a nest-box, with similar stories being heard of the **tits** *Parus*, and an early assessment of the fate of the **Dartford Warblers** *Sylvia undata* was not encouraging. **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* and **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* were common visitors to suburban gardens and many moved down to the southwest, huge numbers being reported from the Exeter (Devon) area.



Birds of prey

The sensation of the month was, however, the appearance of an immature **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* on the Suffolk coast between Minsmere and Sizewell. First found on 23rd, it appeared briefly each day, quite unconcerned, to hordes of watchers, until 30th. Three individuals of the same species had been reported earlier, wintering in Holland. Not-so-lucky victims of the weather were four **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus*, picked up dead in Wales.



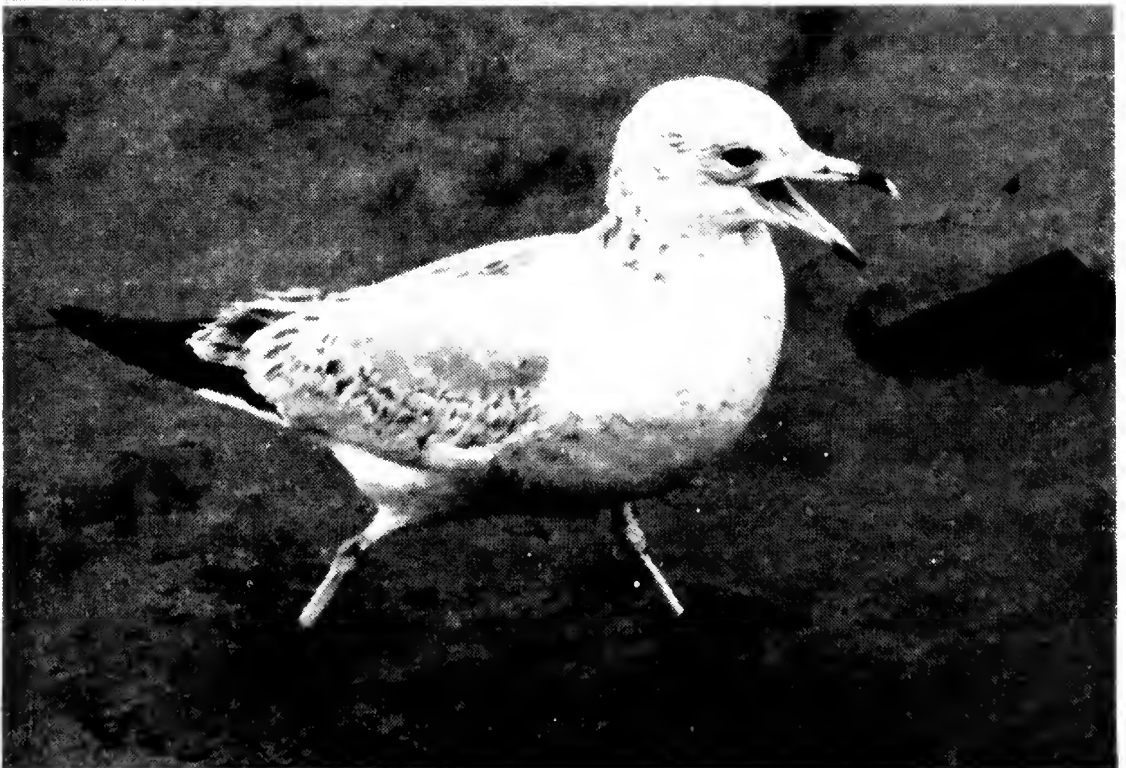
Wading birds

A few more winter records were received from unusual localities of **Bitterns** *Botaurus stellatus*, some unfortunately of dead birds, and two **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* were present at Horning Ferry (Norfolk) from 17th to 24th. An impressive 970 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were counted roosting on the River Stour (Suffolk) on 1st. Wintering waders were not reported as being badly affected by frozen sea-shores, but 2,000 **Knots** *Calidris canutus* at South Walney (Cumbria) on 14th was unusual for that locality. Unusual species over-wintering were a **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Worthing (West Sussex) and a **dowitcher** *Limnodromus* at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall).

Gulls and terns

No changes were reported in the incidence of **Iceland** *Larus glaucoideus* and **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus*, but several sightings of **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were made on the Suffolk coast. An interesting report was of a **Great Black-headed Gull** *L. ichthyaeus* at North Shields (Tyne & Wear). Other rare species included **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* at Slimbridge

61 & 62. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1982 (S. C. Hutchings)





63. First-winter Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Devon, January 1982 (S. G. Hutchings)

(Gloucestershire) on 10th, at Hayle (plates 61 & 62), and on the Isle of Wight, and a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* at Plymouth (Devon) on 22nd (plate 63). An unseasonal find was a **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandwichensis* at Filey Brigg on 10th.

Latest news

First half of March: single **Ring-billed Gulls** in Northern Ireland and north Wales, two in Cork City (Co. Cork) and two in Dingle (Co. Kerry); other Nearctics included a **Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis* on the Ouse Washes. First summer migrants: **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* on 23rd February (Co. Cork), **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* on 1st (Cornwall), and **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* on 14th (Norfolk).

Short reviews

Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America. By Frank C. Belrose. (Croom Helm, 1981, £11.95) Minimally revised edition (two new references) of standard work, first published in 1976; 21 new colour plates adequately illustrate adult, juvenile, downy, and spread wings of swans and geese, and adult male and female, downy, and spread wings of ducks, also eclipse male, and two intermediate plumages between eclipse and breeding. [MAO] **Spotter's Guide to Sea & Freshwater Birds.** By Joe Blossom; illustrated by Trevor Boyer and Alan Harris. (Usborne, 1981, Paperback, £1.25) Suitable for the young, complete novice birdwatcher; nice illustrations, a circle against each bird in which to place one's 'tick', and 15 to 20 words of text. **Animal Evolution.** By Federica Colombo. (Burke Books, 1981, £1.95) Translation of 1979 book *Les animaux et leur environnement*. Nicely designed and well illustrated popular account, with relatively little text. **Animal Society.** By Federica Colombo. (Burke Books, 1981, £4.95) Translation of 1979 book *Les animaux en société*. Short text; well reproduced colour photographs; popular level. **The Nature Trail Book of Woodlands.** By Barbara Cork and Helen Gilks. (Usborne,

1981, Paperback, £1.85) Nicely designed colour-picturebook for children aged about six to 12, full of information and good ideas. **The Doomsday Book of Animals: a unique natural history of vanished species.** By David Day; illustrations by Tim Bramfitt, Peter Hayman, Mick Loates and Maurice Wilson. (Elbury Press, 1981, £11.95) Large format with large type, but far more than a mere coffee-table book, with a most useful résumé of vanished (and vanishing) species. Just over half the book is devoted to birds. Nicely designed, illustrated and produced, with plenty of educational and browsable texts. **Beyond the Bird Feeder: the habits and behavior of feeding-station birds when they are not at your feeder.** By John V. Dennis; drawings by Matthew Kalmenoff. (Alfred A. Knopf, 1981, \$13.95) Like the author's *A Complete Guide to Bird Feeding* (1979), very clearly aimed at a North American readership. **Bird of the Week.** By Jim Flegg; illustrated by Robert Gillmor. (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1981, Paperback, £3.25) The many listeners who enjoyed the Radio 4 series 'Bird of the Week', broadcast during 1980 and 1981, will be equally delighted by this cheap, paperback book. With a

large drawing of each one by Robert Gillmor, there are 52 page-and-a-bit texts of a representative selection of well-known British birds (all single species, except for 'wild swans' and 'wild geese'). There is a one-page contents list and a one-page introduction, but no space 'wasted' on any references. A nice book for bird-lovers: buy it for your aunt or grandmother. **Birds of Southern California: status and distribution.** By **Kimball Garrett and Jon Dunn.** (Los Angeles Audubon Society, 1981. \$18.95) A model avifauna for a defined region, comparable to the best of our familiar county avifaunas. There are detailed accounts of over 500 species, distribution maps of a selection of 60 species (not those which are very local, have distributions easily defined in a text or are strictly coastal) and bar-charts to show seasonal distribution by months (often different in different districts within the large area covered). The texts give more detail than would be needed by the average European reader, but this book is obviously a 'must' for anyone intending to visit San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and environs. Illustrations by Lee Jones of some representative species are a very attractive addition. **Australian Parrots in Bush and Aviary.** By **Ian Harman.** (David & Charles, 1981. £12.50) Under each species, there are the headings 'Nomenclature', 'Male', 'Female', 'Sexing', 'Varieties and hybrids', 'Distribution', 'Field notes', 'Aviary notes' and 'Breeding'. The 'Aviary notes' average several times the length of the 'Field notes', which reflects the emphasis of the book: it is really intended for the aviculturist. **What's That Bird?: a guide to British birds.** By **Peter Hayman and Michael Everett.** (RSPB, 1981. Paperback, £2.50) The first edition of this book has already been reviewed in *British Birds* (72: 234-235), but this revised edition is one and two-thirds the size of the first, with the addition of many of the missing species. The combination of Peter Hayman's paintings (all thumbnail size and many of birds in the act of flying away, just as 'real birds' often are) and Mike Everett's appropriate short texts alongside provides excellent reference material for birdwatchers of every degree of competence, and an excellent introduction for the complete beginner. It is most useful to have three pages devoted to illustrations of common fledglings and also four pages to finches and buntings (plus sparrows), but the non-systematic arrangement elsewhere leads, for instance, to the only illustrations of Sand

Martin appearing on page 55 under 'Inland waters in spring and summer' whereas Swift, House Martin and Swallow appear on page 19 under 'Woods, fields and gardens in summer'. I do, however, feel guilty at making any criticism, for the book is excellent and I strongly recommend it. **Spotter's Guide to Birds of Prey.** By **Peter Holden and Richard Porter; illustrated by Ian Wallace and David Wright.** (Usborne, 1981. Paperback, £1.25) Nicely illustrated small guide for the beginner; unlike some other Usborne guides, distribution maps are included and the texts and paintings concentrate rather more on identification (hardly surprising, considering the names among the authors and artists). Of small, cheap books covering a limited group of species, this is one of the best. **The Birds of Saudi Arabia: a check-list.** By **Michael C. Jennings.** (M. C. Jennings, 1981. £6.30 post free, £7.30 air mail) This privately published checklist contains an average of three or four lines of text for each species, including the author's comments, which are often most helpful in interpreting status. There are also 117 distribution maps cautiously entitled 'Suggested breeding range sketch maps' which provide splendid cockshies and will undoubtedly lead to further information becoming available. This useful booklet is available from the author at 10 Mill Lane, Whittlesford, Cambridge. **The Breeding Birds of Europe 1: a photographic handbook (divers to auks).** By **Manfred Pforr and Alfred Limbrunner.** (Croom Helm, 1981. £14.95) The species included are illustrated by, usually, one large and three small colour photographs, which are excellently chosen and well reproduced; for this alone, the book is well worth having for reference purposes. The short texts (usually about 200 words) cover habitat, migration, food and so on, but not identification. The maps showing distribution (in pale green on yellow) are sometimes so obviously and seriously inaccurate or out of date that it would be difficult to place reliance on the others. The book is said to include 'all major species breeding in Europe', but 45 which are omitted are listed in the appendix and include such species as Great Northern Diver, Manx Shearwater, Storm Petrel, Merlin, Red-legged Partridge, Corncrake and Little Gull. One must suspect that inclusion or exclusion has depended more on availability of photographs (the sources are said to be wildlife photographers in Germany, Austria and Denmark) than to any scientific principle. This splendid-look-

ing book (the first of two volumes) could have been so much better if there had been more comprehensive coverage and more attention to accuracy. Nevertheless, it will still perform a useful function on any birdwatcher's bookshelves. **Die Bekassine.** By **Eberhard Reddig.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 533, A. Ziemsen Verlag, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1981, DM11.90) A monograph of the Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. As usual with this series, wholly in German, but an essential reference for anyone studying the species. **Spotter's Guide to Town & City Wildlife.** By **Diana Shipp.** (Usborne, 1981, Paperback, £1.25) The usual Usborne 'Spotter's guide' format, with generally sensible choice of species illustrated. These small guides must be doing a very good job of interesting schoolchildren in the natural history of the countryside and, in this case, of urban areas. **A Garden of Birds.** By **Keith Snow; illustrated by Norman Arlott.** (World's Work Ltd, 1981, £3.95) Slim volume, nicely illustrated in colour, covering a dozen of the commonest garden birds. More than 12p per page does,

however, seem excessive. **Saving the Animals: the World Wildlife Fund book of conservation.** By **Bernard Stonehouse.** (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1981, £9.95) Popular account of success stories in animal conservation, arranged under habitats. Some of the many photographs are absolutely stunning, but the impact is spoiled by bad design: many of the photographs extend over one-and-a-half pages, so that they have a crease through them and, since the book does not fold flat, part of the picture is lost; with a larger format, this book could have been magnificent. The photographic reproduction, especially of the colour plates, is first-rate. **Birds in Medieval Manuscripts.** By **Brunsdon Yapp.** (The British Library, 1981, £9.50) Colour illustrations from 41 manuscripts illuminated with bird drawings between the years 698 and 1482. The bird illustrations are identified (in some cases tentatively) and ornithological conclusions drawn from them. A highly original and fascinating book for the bird historian. JFRS

Reviews

Form and Function in Birds, vol. 2. Edited by A. S. King and J. McLelland. Academic Press, London, 1981. 496 pages; 207 figures, including monochrome photographs and line-drawings. £42.00.

Volume 1 has already been reviewed (*Brit. Birds* 73: 433-434). This second volume continues the high standard of the previous one and will be an essential reference for the serious research worker. It contains the following eight chapters, each complete with its own bibliography: male genital organs (female genital organs were in volume 1); Cloaca; Phallus (= copulatory organ); Endocrine Glands; Cardiovascular System; Lymphatic System; the Cranial Nerves; and the Functional Anatomy of the Avian Jaw Apparatus. As with the previous volume, there is a high standard of production with a large number of very clear line-drawings. A number of the chapters start with a good background to the evolution of the particular structures, comparing them with those found in reptiles or mammals. This is a specialist reference work of high quality which, although not the sort of book that the general ornithologist will want to buy, should certainly be a 'must' for major libraries. C. M. PERRINS

Atlas van de Nederlandse Broedvogels. Edited by R. M. Teixeira. Vereniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland, 's-Graveland, 1979. 431 pages; many line-drawings and distribution maps. Fl 34.95.

The results of the Dutch atlas project (1973-77) are presented in a particularly attractive manner. The maps are rather large (5 × 5 km basic squares reduced to 2.5 × 2.5 mm squares), and two-toned. A whole page is devoted to the text, and, as in most similar works, a small black-and-white drawing is generally successful in suggesting the species. The text is very informative, though I would have preferred less general information on the biology of the

species, obtainable from other sources, and more specific interpretation of the distribution pattern shown by the maps, precise descriptions of local Dutch habitats and more extensive use of the quantitative data that were gathered. It is indeed in the detailed description of the ecological preferences of local populations or subpopulations, and in a perceptive analysis of small-scale distribution patterns that national atlases can bring the most to the general reader. Much indispensable information is, however, provided on the quantitative evolution of the populations, and many of the maps are extremely instructive for the ornithologist not familiar with the Netherlands. Thus, for instance, the very uniform distribution of the Meadow Pipit, the scarcity of the Kingfisher, the complete absence of the Stonechat in the most intensively used corridor of the western Netherlands, the omnipresence of the originally montane Black Redstart, and the alarming gaps in the coastal distribution of the Kentish Plover. Altogether, the Dutch atlas represents a very rich source of information and the best recent account of the avifauna of a country with unique aspects of land use and concomitant bird adaptations.

PIERRE DEVILLERS

Histoire et Géographie des Oiseaux Nicheurs de Bretagne. Edited by Yvon Guermeurend and Jan-Yves Monnat. Société pour L'Étude et la Protection de la Nature en Bretagne, Brest, 1980. 240 pages; 1 black-and-white plate; 30 line-drawings; 150 distribution maps. No price given.

With a presentation very similar to that of national atlases, this excellent regional account is intended as a complement to the pioneering French atlas of the late Laurent Yeatman. The data used are the same (those of the 1970-75 French atlas project), the differences between the maps presented here and the earlier ones of the French atlas resulting only from the correction of errors, the deletion of pre-atlas data, and the addition of archive data not previously available. The interpretive text is much more developed, particularly in the direction of historical analysis of the evolution of the population, both in area of distribution and in numbers. There is also a fairly detailed description of the local habitats, made possible by the smaller geographical scope of the work. This very attractively designed book points to a potentially very fruitful follow-up of the national atlases: a finer, smaller-scale interpretation and analysis of the original data. To the British reader, it should be particularly instructive, as Brittany is a peninsular area with habitats very reminiscent of some parts of the British Isles. Moreover, the atlas provides a very complete account and historical analysis of the seabird populations of Brittany.

PIERRE DEVILLERS

Atlas des Oiseaux Nicheurs de Suisse. Edited by A. Schifferli, P. Géroutet and R. Winkler. Station ornithologique Suisse de Sempach, Sempach, 1980. 462 pages; many line-drawings and distribution maps. SwF58.00.

The results of the Swiss atlas project, conducted during 1972-76, are presented in the now-standard format. Rather small (basic 10×10 km squares reduced to 3.5×3.5 mm squares), but very legible, one-coloured maps are accompanied by a bilingual (French and German) text and a small drawing evoking the species. A general introduction covers methods, execution of the work—with an interesting analysis of the progress of the coverage over the five years—and use of the atlas; this latter subsection contains several remarks of general interest on the general distribution of the avifauna (e.g. average number of species per square 86, versus 75 in Britain, attributed to diversity of habitat in Switzerland, though the effect of insularity could also have been invoked). There then follows a section on altitudinal distribution, a particularly important subject in Switzerland, so important that one may regret that no way was found to display this distribution on auxiliary maps. Other sections discuss an atlas of the Geneva area covered on 1×1 km squares, and the relations between distribution and plant associations, a particularly useful discussion that I would have liked to see continued under the species headings. Indeed, the text that accompanies each map is clear and concise, but leaves the non-Swiss reader a little uninformed as to the interpretation of the distributions he sees on the maps. The patterns are indeed rarely explained. Much very useful quantitative information on densities or evolution of populations, mostly collected outside the atlas project, is, however, provided in the texts, making the atlas an important source of information on the fluctuations of the European avifauna.

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Population fluctuations of the Little Grebe

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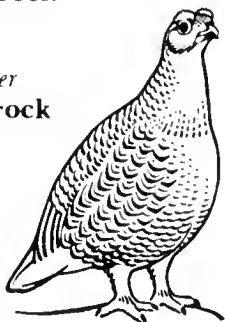
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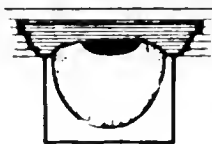
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 5 MAY 1982

Mortality of Sparrowhawks and Kestrels



I. Newton, A. A. Bell and I. Wyllie

Between 1963 and 1979, the carcasses of 341 Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and 616 Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* were examined at Monks Wood Experimental Station, Cambridgeshire, to find the cause of death. The carcasses were sent in by members of the public, in response to advertisements in national bird journals. All carcasses were requested, irrespective of region and form of death. The main objective was to obtain tissues for analysis of pesticide residues, but, in addition, each carcass was autopsied, taking account of any notes from the sender on the circumstances of death. From most specimens, liver samples were analysed to determine the concentrations of DDE (from the insecticide DDT), PCB (from industrial polychlorinated biphenyls), and HEOD (from the insecticides aldrin and dieldrin). This paper gives the results of the post-mortem examinations, but mentions the analytical results only briefly, as these have been reviewed in detail by Cooke *et al.* (1981).

During most of the period covered here, aldrin and dieldrin were used mainly against the wheat bulb-fly *Delia coarctata*. For some purposes, we assumed that areas where this pest was a major problem (called 'wheat bulb-fly areas') had a heavier use of aldrin and dieldrin than elsewhere.

These compounds were singled out for special attention because they were thought to have caused the decline of Sparrowhawks in the late 1950s through large-scale poisoning (Ratcliffe 1970).

Causes of death among Sparrowhawks and Kestrels were previously discussed by Glue (1971), based on details supplied with ringing recoveries, and those of Kestrels by Keymer (1972) and Keymer *et al.* (1981), based on a scheme similar to ours, but with the emphasis on disease. In addition, one or both species figured to a small extent in some more general autopsy schemes, both on wild birds (Jennings 1961) and on captive ones (Cooper 1972, Kenward 1974, 1981).

Procedure

Each bird was sexed and aged on arrival, and was then stored deep-frozen until it could be examined in detail. The carcass was assigned to one of the following categories, according to whether death seemed to have been caused by:

1. Collision with a stationary object: usually found beside a window, wires, or other obstacle and showing bruising, usually on the forepart of the body.
2. Collision with a moving vehicle: usually found on a roadside; with bruising, often confined to one side, and sometimes with broken bones.
3. Collision with unknown object, or other trauma, such as drowning or electrocution.
4. Shooting: wounds evident on dissection, and in some cases gun-shot found in tissues.
5. Haemorrhage: widespread internal bleeding, especially around brain, heart, lungs and fore-gut, not obviously the result of impact.
6. Disease: death not clearly attributable to any of the above, but obvious lesions or parasites in one or more tissues; usually in poor condition, with wasted breast muscles.
7. Starvation: light in weight, in poor condition with wasted breast muscles, gut usually empty and blackened; not obviously diseased.
8. Cause unknown: not readily assigned to any of the above categories; no lesions, injuries or other abnormalities apparent.

Samples of diseased birds were sent to pathologists who identified more precisely some of the lesions and parasites which we found (table 1). In addition, as a result of the chemical analyses, we were able to examine the organochlorine levels in birds which had died from different causes.

Immatures were classed as 'juvenile' until July in their second calendar year when the next crop of young began to disperse from nest areas; thus, this term, as applied here, refers to age and not to plumage. Some individuals could not be aged or sexed, either because they were received only after the skin had been removed for taxidermy, or, in a few cases, because only certain tissues were received.

Results

Sparrowhawk

The numbers of carcasses received each year increased from the mid 1960s into the 1970s (fig. 1). In addition, the proportion of the total carcasses that were from wheat bulb-fly areas doubled, from 6% in the 1960s to 12% in the 1970s. Combining the records from different years, particularly large numbers of carcasses were received in August and September, and even larger numbers in March and April (fig. 2). The August-September peak

Table 1. Seasonal variation in the numbers (%) of deaths of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* attributed to different causes

Supposed cause of death	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTALS
SPARROWHAWK													
Collision with stationary object	8 (29)	9 (35)	14 (33)	20 (31)	12 (39)	1 (13)	3 (25)	15 (50)	16 (43)	8 (35)	5 (31)	5 (23)	116 (34)
Road or rail casualty	2 (7)	1 (4)	1 (2)	7 (11)	1 (3)	0 (0)	4 (33)	1 (3)	3 (8)	3 (13)	1 (6)	1 (5)	25 (7)
Other trauma	4 (14)	2 (8)	3 (7)	5 (8)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	3 (8)	0 (0)	2 (13)	2 (9)	23 (7)
Shooting	4 (14)	6 (23)	2 (5)	7 (11)	3 (10)	2 (25)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (3)	2 (9)	4 (25)	5 (23)	37 (11)
Haemorrhages	3 (11)	4 (15)	9 (21)	11 (17)	3 (10)	3 (38)	3 (25)	3 (10)	2 (5)	2 (9)	2 (13)	2 (9)	47 (14)
Disease	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (2)	2 (3)	5 (16)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	3 (8)	2 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (4)
Starvation	2 (7)	3 (12)	4 (9)	3 (5)	2 (6)	1 (13)	0 (0)	3 (10)	5 (14)	2 (9)	1 (6)	3 (14)	29 (9)
Unknown	4 (14)	1 (4)	9 (21)	10 (15)	4 (13)	1 (13)	2 (17)	5 (17)	4 (11)	4 (17)	1 (6)	4 (18)	49 (14)
TOTALS	28	26	43	65	31	8	12	36	37	23	16	22	341
KESTREL													
Collision with stationary object	3 (5)	1 (2)	3 (5)	0 (0)	1 (4)	1 (6)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (6)	13 (2)
Road or rail casualty	7 (12)	2 (4)	4 (6)	3 (7)	0 (0)	4 (25)	6 (14)	18 (19)	6 (15)	12 (17)	8 (14)	5 (7)	75 (12)
Other trauma	5 (9)	3 (6)	3 (5)	6 (13)	2 (9)	3 (19)	4 (9)	7 (7)	6 (15)	7 (10)	4 (7)	3 (6)	53 (9)
Shooting	2 (3)	2 (4)	2 (3)	3 (7)	2 (9)	0 (0)	1 (2)	3 (3)	2 (5)	3 (4)	2 (4)	1 (2)	23 (4)
Haemorrhages	18 (31)	16 (33)	17 (27)	10 (22)	7 (30)	3 (19)	1 (2)	1 (1)	2 (5)	5 (7)	1 (2)	2 (4)	83 (13)
Disease	0 (0)	8 (16)	9 (15)	6 (13)	1 (4)	1 (6)	6 (14)	3 (3)	7 (17)	8 (11)	11 (19)	8 (15)	68 (11)
Starvation	10 (17)	6 (12)	7 (11)	4 (9)	2 (9)	2 (13)	22 (50)	49 (51)	9 (22)	24 (34)	23 (40)	18 (34)	176 (29)
Unknown	13 (22)	11 (23)	17 (27)	13 (29)	8 (35)	2 (13)	3 (7)	16 (16)	9 (22)	12 (17)	8 (14)	13 (25)	125 (20)
TOTALS	58	49	62	45	23	16	44	97	41	71	57	53	616

Note: The following lesions, diseases and parasites were identified among birds in the 'disease' category.

SPARROWHAWK: kidney lesions (1), ovary lesions (1), enteritis (5), pneumonia (1), aspergillosis (1), tuberculosis (1), erysipelas (1), nematode infestation (4); **KESTREL:** kidney lesions (4), intestine lesions (1), prolapsed abdominal fat (1), ulcerous oesophagus (7), hookworm (1), enteritis (13), nephritis (4), pneumonia (4), aspergillosis (3), tuberculosis (3), aspergillosis/tuberculosis (2), pleurisy (1), tox (1), pasteurellosis (3), tapeworms (1), nematodes (10), gapeworms (9).

was due almost entirely to juveniles, but both adults and juveniles contributed to the spring peak.

The sex ratio in the sample was 137 males to 193 females, a deviation from unity that was significant statistically ($\chi^2 = 4.9$, $P < 0.05$). Females predominated in most months, both among adults and among juveniles. This held even in June, when most females would have been on nests and immune to the commoner kinds of recorded mortality. As expected, however, the age composition of the sample changed greatly during the year, with juveniles predominating in late summer and early autumn, and adults during most of the rest of the year.

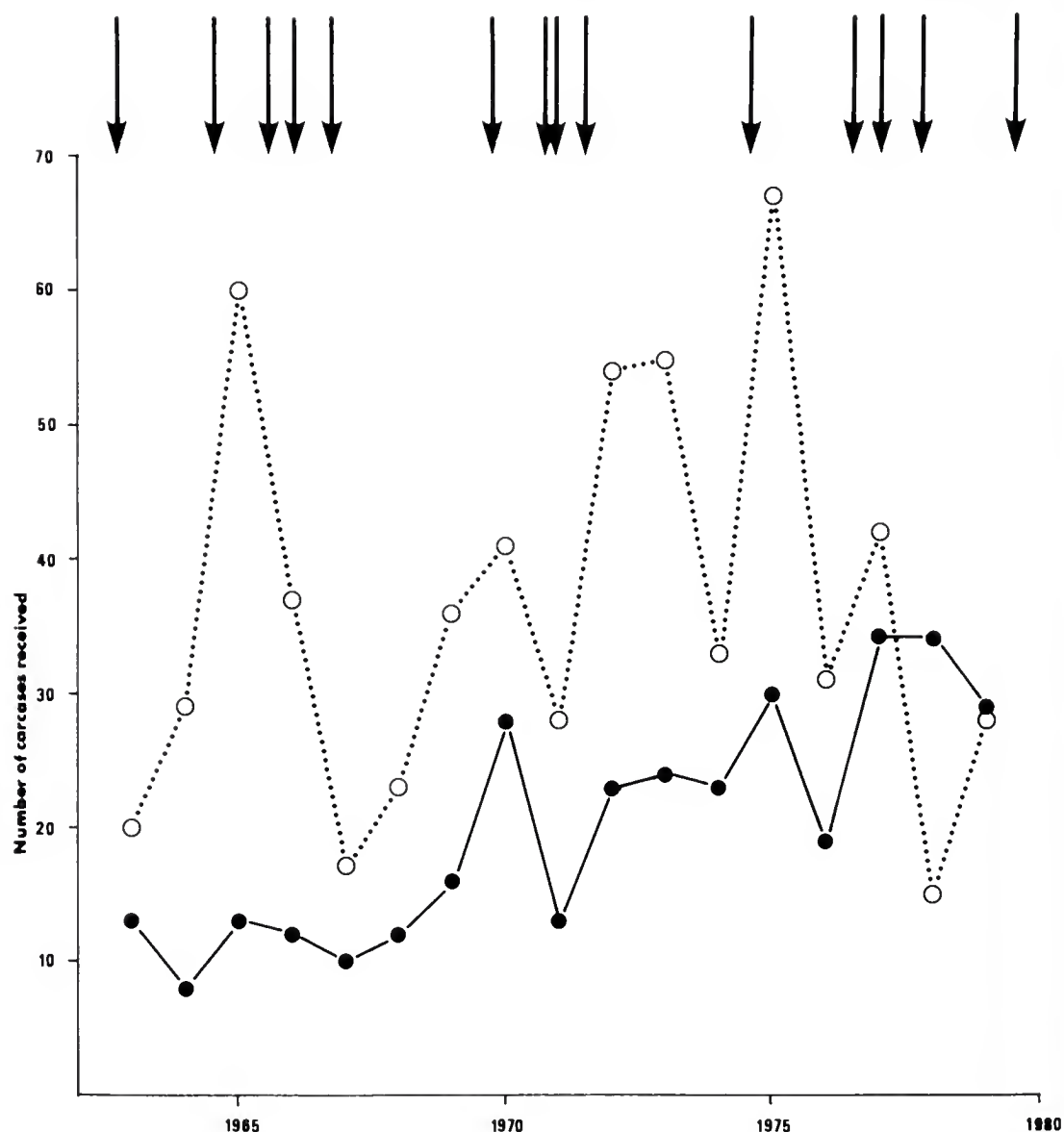


Fig. 1. Numbers of carcasses received at Monks Wood Experimental Station, Cambridgeshire, each year, 1963-79. Continuous line, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*; dotted line, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. Arrows show dates of advertisements requesting corpses

Of all deaths, 48% were attributed to collisions or other accidents, 11% to shooting, 14% to haemorrhages, 9% to starvation and 4% to disease, while the remaining 14% were undiagnosed (table 1). In general, the proportions in the different categories varied only slightly between years, seasons, sexes and age groups. The proportions of deaths attributed to haemorrhages declined, however, after 1975 (22% in 1971-75 versus 8% in 1976-79), with a corresponding increase in the proportions attributed to most other causes.

To investigate the pesticide concentrations in birds which died in different ways, we calculated the proportions of individuals in each death category whose livers contained more than 10 ppm HEOD or more than 100 ppm DDE (no bird had more than 100 ppm PCB). Cooke *et al.* (1981) took these levels as indicative of death from these compounds. Significant variation in residue levels occurred among the different death categories: the 'haemorrhage' and 'cause unknown' groups contained more birds that

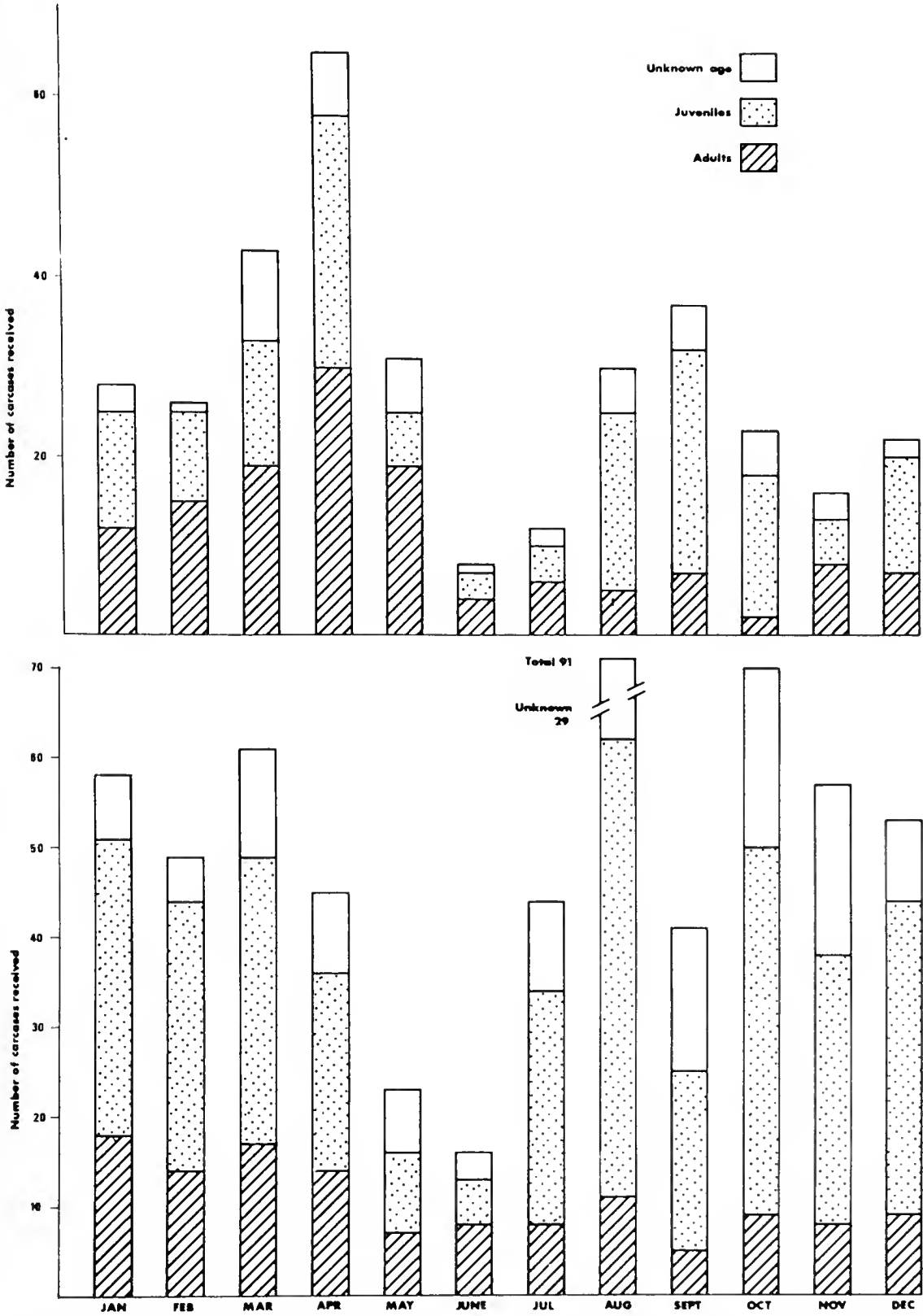


Fig. 2. Numbers of carcasses received at Monks Wood Experimental Station, Cambridgeshire, in different months, all years combined. Upper, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*; lower, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

were heavily contaminated with HEOD or DDE than did the remaining groups (table 2). Thus, eight (17%) of 46 haemorrhage birds that were analysed had more than 10 ppm HEOD in their livers and seven (15%) had more than 100 ppm DDE, though none had such high levels of both compounds together. About 24% of all carcasses from wheat bulb-fly areas

Table 2. Proportion of carcasses of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in different death categories with high concentrations of organochlorine in the liver

DDE is from DDT, and HEOD from aldrin and dieldrin; ppm = parts per million; * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

Supposed death cause	Number analysed	SPARROWHAWK		Number analysed	KESTREL	
		Number (%) with: >100 ppm DDE	>10 ppm HEOD		Number (%) with: >100 ppm DDE	>10 ppm HEOD
Collision or other accident	147	3 (2)	2 (1)	119	3 (3)	4 (4)
Shooting	32	2 (6)	0 (0)	21	1 (5)	0 (0)
Haemorrhaging	46	7 (15)	8 (17)	75	6 (8)	41 (55)
Disease	15	0 (0)	0 (0)	57	2 (4)	1 (2)
Starvation	25	4 (16)	1 (4)	150	0 (0)	3 (2)
Unknown	40	1 (3)	6 (15)	98	3 (3)	29 (30)
Significance of variation among categories (χ^2)	—	17.7**	26.3***	—	11.6*	153.5***

showed haemorrhages, compared with 13% from elsewhere ($\chi^2 = 2.27$, $P < 0.1$).

Kestrel

In contrast to the Sparrowhawks, no long-term increase occurred in the numbers of Kestrels received; rather, the numbers fluctuated from year to year, with no clear pattern (fig. 1). The fluctuations did not correspond with year-to-year changes in the numbers of nest record cards received by the BTO (at least during 1963-70, Newton 1979), which are in turn thought to correlate with changes in the densities of voles (*Microtinae*), the Kestrel's main prey. Nor did any change occur over the years in the proportion of the total carcasses that came from wheat bulb-fly areas: these remained at 42% in the 1960s and in the 1970s. Combining the records from different years, little variation in numbers occurred from month to month, except for a low in May-June (the breeding season), and a peak in August (the time when young had recently left their natal areas). Among the birds that were sexed (93% of the total), the ratio of males to females was approximately equal (266 : 281), although males predominated in the small samples from May-June, presumably because most females were on nests then. The age-composition of the sample varied through the year, as expected, but juveniles predominated in every month, especially during July-December.

Of all deaths, 23% were attributed to collisions or other accidents, 4% to shooting, 13% to haemorrhages, 29% to starvation, 11% to disease, and the remaining 20% to unknown causes. The main variations apparent between different years, different seasons, and different sex and age groups were as follows:

a) The proportion of road casualties increased over the years from 8% in 1963-70, to 11% in 1971-75, and 19% in 1976-79. This was not surprising in view of the Kestrel's habit of feeding by roadsides, and the increase in traffic. As road deaths increased, however, other accidents decreased, so that the total percentage of birds dying from accidents of any kind (including on roads) increased only slightly in this time. Fewer deaths were attributed to unknown causes in

the 1970s than in the 1960s, and, after 1975, the proportion of haemorrhage birds declined (26% in 1971-75 versus 9% in 1976-79), as in the case of the Sparrowhawk.

b) Haemorrhage birds were largely restricted to the period January-May each year, and starved birds were most prevalent in July-December (table 1).

c) Starvation was more frequent among juveniles, and haemorrhages among adults. This last finding may have been because many of the juveniles in the population died of starvation in autumn before they could be killed by haemorrhage in spring.

As in the case of the Sparrowhawk, significant variations in organochlorine levels occurred among those that had died from different causes (table 2). No less than 55% of 75 haemorrhage birds that were analysed had more than 10 ppm HEOD in their liver, as had 30% of those in the 'cause unknown' category. Six (8%) of the haemorrhage birds had more than 100 ppm DDE in their livers, but three of these also had more than 10 ppm HEOD. Some 21% of carcasses from wheat bulb-fly areas were of haemorrhage birds, compared with 9% from other areas, a highly significant difference ($\chi^2 = 17.9$, $P < 0.001$).

Discussion

Almost certainly, the steady rise in the numbers of Sparrowhawk carcasses received from the mid 1960s onwards reflected the rise in Sparrowhawk numbers in the environment over this period, and the recolonisation of areas from which the species had been eliminated by pesticide poisoning in the late 1950s. These changes in status followed from successive restrictions in the use of organochlorine pesticides, particularly aldrin and dieldrin, which ceased to be used for spring-sown grain from 1963, for autumn-sown grain from 1975, and for additional minor uses from other years. This interpretation would also explain the greater proportion of carcasses from wheat bulb-fly areas in recent years, as birds had reached lower numbers in these areas by 1963, and so subsequently had further to recover. In contrast to Sparrowhawks, the numbers of Kestrels received did not increase over the years, and nor did the proportion that came from wheat bulb-fly areas. The numbers of this species in the countryside were, however, reduced less markedly than those of Sparrowhawks to begin with, though decline was still greatest in areas of high aldrin/dieldrin use. In general, however, its numbers would not be expected to increase as did those of the Sparrowhawk.

Despite the difference in long-term trend, the numbers received of both species tended to fluctuate in parallel, with peaks in 1965, 1970, 1973, 1975 and 1977. This pattern could not apparently be explained by the timing of advertisements (see fig. 1), so was possibly due to annual fluctuations in some environmental factor, which affected both species similarly. It was clearly not hard winters; whatever the cause, we cannot explain it.

The uneven sex ratio among the Sparrowhawks received was probably because the sexes prefer different habitats: hens spend less time in woodland, and more time around farmland and villages, than do cocks, and would thus be more likely to die in places where they could be found by people (Marquiss & Newton 1981). No such habitat difference is known for the Kestrel, and, fitting with this, the sex ratio of the samples was almost equal, except in May-June, when most females would have been on nests.

and, therefore, not vulnerable to the usual types of mortality recorded.

The late summer peak in the numbers of both species received was due chiefly to juveniles. It covered the period when juveniles had just left their natal areas, and were beginning to fend for themselves. It was slightly earlier for the Kestrel than for the Sparrowhawk carcasses received. It covered the period each year when the songbird prey of Sparrowhawks were scarcest, as the lowest level of most resident prey species occurs in April, just before the start of breeding, while most winter visitors have left then and most summer migrants have not yet arrived. Moreover, Sparrowhawk numbers in the countryside would have reached their own seasonal low at this time. The carcasses received in spring were not all of starved birds, though these did figure prominently at this time. Perhaps food shortage predisposed Sparrowhawks to various kinds of death. Starving individuals may have been more vulnerable to diseases and parasites, and, if they increased their hunting activity, they might have been more prone to collisions or other accidents too. Over the year as a whole, it seems that juveniles of both species were more vulnerable than adults, for they were more frequent in our sample than expected from known breeding rates among the population at large.

The main difference in recorded mortality between the species was the larger number of accidental deaths (mainly collisions) of Sparrowhawks (48%, compared with 23% in the case of Kestrels), and the larger number of starved individuals among Kestrels (29%, compared with 9% of Sparrowhawks). Other differences were relatively minor. The large proportion of accidental deaths among Sparrowhawks was presumably due to the impetuous hunting method of the species. This form of mortality could presumably take an increasing toll, as the growth in road traffic, overhead wires, buildings and other human development continues. Surprisingly, starvation among Kestrels seemed to occur in all months of the year, but it was especially prevalent during August, when it accounted for about half the recorded deaths among the newly produced young. Evidently, for young Kestrels, the late summer peak in vole numbers was not sufficient to offset the effects of inexperience and of long vegetation hiding the prey.

Although both species were under full legal protection throughout the period considered here, at least 37 (11%) Sparrowhawks and 23 (4%) Kestrels had been shot. This form of mortality was presumably underestimated, as most people who knowingly shot a protected species would take steps to prevent their action coming to light.

In both species, haemorrhages seemed to have been a frequent symptom of organochlorine poisoning. More of the birds that had died of haemorrhages had higher levels of HEOD (10 ppm) or of DDE (100 ppm) than did those that had died from other causes. A few haemorrhage Kestrels had high levels of both compounds, but most Kestrels and all Sparrowhawks had high levels of only one or the other. It seemed, therefore, that both compounds could cause haemorrhages, but that HEOD did so at much lower concentrations than DDE. Further circumstantial evidence for the link between HEOD and haemorrhages was that (a) more cases were from areas of high aldrin/dieldrin usage than from other areas; (b) almost all

cases were in late winter and spring when dressed grain was sown; and (c) cases declined in frequency after 1975, when the use of these compounds as seed-dressings was further restricted. Many of the birds whose cause of death was not diagnosed on post-mortem examination also had high concentrations of HEOD in their livers. This suggests that many such birds had been poisoned by aldrin or dieldrin, though without obvious haemorrhages. Further, haemorrhages may, of course, have been caused in some birds by factors other than organochlorines.

There is no reason to suppose that the proportions of various kinds of death recorded in the scheme were representative of the populations as a whole. Samples received were inevitably biased towards mortality associated with human activities, or occurring near human habitation. Certain natural kinds of death, such as predation, were much less likely to be recorded by people, and, in those circumstances, carcasses were unlikely to have been obtained. The same bias applies to ringing recoveries, so it was not surprising that, in some respects, the recent British recoveries gave a similar picture of mortality causes to that shown by the carcasses examined here (Glue 1971). In our sample, disease and starvation were often hard to separate, as they both entailed poor body-condition, and, even where lesions were found, we could not be sure which was the primary cause of death.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many observers who have sent in carcasses over the years and without whom this analysis (together with the pesticide study of Cooke *et al.* 1981) would not have been possible. We also thank J. W. Macdonald of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and W. M. Goodchild of the Poultry Research Centre, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, for diagnosing various diseases and ailments, and Dr A. S. Cooke, Dr J. P. Dempster, Dr M. Marquiss and Dr A. Village for helpful comments on the manuscript.

Summary

1. The numbers of corpses of Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* received for analysis at Monks Wood increased between the mid 1960s and the late 1970s, while the number of carcasses of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* fluctuated from year to year with no clear trend.
2. Among Sparrowhawks, females outnumbered males in the sample, but in the case of Kestrels the sex ratio was approximately equal. Among Sparrowhawks, juveniles predominated in late summer and early autumn, and among Kestrels they outnumbered adults in most months.
3. Both species showed a peak in the numbers of carcasses received in late summer, soon after the young had left their natal areas, and, in the case of the Sparrowhawk, an even bigger peak occurred in spring, the time of greatest food shortage.
4. Among Sparrowhawks, 18% of deaths were attributed to collisions or other accidents, 11% to shooting, 14% to haemorrhages, 9% to starvation, 4% to disease, and 14% to unknown causes.
5. Among Kestrels, the corresponding figures were: accidents 23%, shooting 4%, haemorrhages 13%, disease 11%, starvation 29% and unknown causes 20%.
6. In both species, those which had died from internal haemorrhages (not obviously due to impact) or from causes undiagnosed on post-mortem more often had more than 10 ppm of HEOD (from aldrin or dieldrin) or more than 100 ppm of DDE (from DDT) in their livers than did those which died from other causes. These levels are thought to be indicative of poisoning.

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Breeding and population fluctuations of the Little Grebe



Keith Vinicombe

Despite being a common British bird, the Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* is not particularly well known. It is secretive during the breeding season, spending much time hidden in emergent vegetation and, unlike the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, it rarely occurs in large concentrations, so assessments of annual and seasonal population fluctuations are difficult to obtain. Ringing recoveries shed little light on movements as, like all grebes, the species is difficult to trap. In *BWP*, the Little Grebe is described as resident, dispersive and migratory, with a less marked winter movement to coasts or large lakes than other European grebes. The

extent of movement is linked to winter temperatures, so, in northern and eastern Europe, regular winter freezing compels movement which may be southward migration or dispersal to the nearest open water. In Britain and elsewhere in temperate and southern Europe, the Little Grebe is considered to be basically resident, though some (perhaps juveniles) disperse. *BIIP* also notes autumn flocking on some reservoirs in southeast England, but the moult movements clearly demonstrated for the Great Crested Grebe are not specifically noted for this species. On a more local level, the species' status seems somewhat complicated and contradictory. For example, in the old county of Somerset, it was regarded by Palmer & Ballance (1968) as 'Mainly summer visitor from March to early November, some wintering and others passing through in spring and autumn', while in the adjacent county of Dorset it was described by Boys (1973) as 'Resident . . . but more numerous in winter on coasts.'

This paper, based on observations in western Britain, is therefore an attempt to clarify certain aspects of the annual and seasonal population variations, as well as to provide information on breeding. Between 1966 and 1979, I made regular counts of Little Grebes, Great Crested Grebes and other species at Chew Valley Lake, Avon (formerly Somerset). Counts were made by circumnavigating the reservoir sometimes as often as once a week or more. For the purposes of this paper, I have used figures obtained in the ten years 1970-79. This is a convenient time span and, by 1970, any teething problems experienced in the early years had largely been rectified. I also made detailed assessments of breeding numbers by making regular summer brood counts. I found that the most accurate method of doing this was by plotting the broods onto maps. Unfortunately, I did not begin mapping until 1971, so breeding figures are based mainly on the nine years 1971-79, since earlier counts may be somewhat less exhaustive and less accurate. Where gaps occur in my own information, I have used additional counts published in the annual county report *Somerset Birds* and the Bristol Ornithological Club's monthly bulletin *Bird News*, many of these additional counts being made by A. J. Merritt. I have tried, so far as possible, to make comparisons with the Great Crested Grebe, which is much more numerous and more easily observed at the lake.

The Chew counts are compared with a smaller sample from the island of Anglesey, Gwynedd. During August 1976 to February 1977, I was engaged, under the auspices of the RSPB, in surveying birds on the numerous small lakes, reservoirs and tidal waters on the island. Although covering only one autumn and winter, the Anglesey figures are particularly useful as they include counts from saltwater areas, thereby giving a better indication of what happens to the Little Grebes outside the breeding season.

Chew Valley Lake: physical and biological background

Before discussing the grebes, it is important to understand something of the lake itself. The physical and chemical aspects of Chew Valley have been studied by Wilson *et al.* (1975a), while a biological study was undertaken by the same authors (Wilson *et al.* 1975b). The following details are based almost exclusively on these sources.

Chew Valley Lake is a shallow, hard-water, lowland eutrophic reservoir

of the impounded valley type. It is the largest of a group of four reservoirs south of Bristol. Together with Blagdon Lake, 2.5km to the west, and Cheddar Reservoir, 12km to the southwest, it forms one of the most important areas of freshwater in southern England. It has an area of 500 ha, a perimeter of 15.4km and an average depth of 4.3m. The banks of both Chew and Blagdon are almost entirely natural. Despite the closeness of Blagdon, there are important differences between the two lakes. Chew is 52 years younger, more than twice the size, more exposed to wind action and shore erosion, more turbid, has less oxygen, less extensive macrophyte vegetation, a less varied littoral fauna and more plankton. Particularly relevant to grebes, Chew has roach *Rutilus rutilus* and perch *Perca fluviatilis*.

One of the most important aspects of the lake is the annual fluctuations in water level. The levels are generally at their highest in late winter and early spring, but begin to fall from about May onwards, the rate at which the water falls depending, of course, on the weather during the summer and preceding winter and the amount pumped out. In warm, dry summers, the levels will fall rapidly, curtailing the breeding season for those species which nest in emergent vegetation, while in cool, wet summers the breeding season is prolonged as the levels remain high well into August and sometimes even September. The water reaches a minimum usually in late autumn, but generally rises rapidly in winter until the late winter/early spring maximum is again reached. Wilson *et al.* (1975a) recorded an average minimum of 2.49m below top level, with a maximum reduction of 4.86m in November 1964 (similar reductions occurred in 1973, 1975 and 1976). The fluctuations have several important consequences. Large exposures of the littoral zone occur with only a small fall in the level and the fluctuations have a profound effect on the littoral biota, rendering the environment unfit for many aquatic species. A feature of both Chew and Blagdon is the rich community of semi-aquatic plants which develops on the exposed mud. About two-thirds of the perimeter of Chew contains emergent vegetation suitable for nesting birds, with common reeds *Phragmites australis*, willows *Salix* and amphibious bistort *Polygonum amphibium* widespread. In autumn, low water levels presumably have a concentrating effect on the shoals of fish at a time when the maximum number of grebes is present.

Wilson *et al.* (1975a & b) described a serious increase in nutrients and other materials in the outflow waters of both Chew and Blagdon since the mid 1960s. This increase is closely linked to the onset of deoxygenation in their bottom waters, which apparently occurred for the first time at Chew in 1968 and at Blagdon in 1972. The two lakes now rank among the most eutrophic in Great Britain and, for a short time in 1972, the water in Chew became virtually anoxic below 3.5m before a thunderstorm had the effect of reaerating the water. Both lakes suffer from large summer blooms of algae, which, at Chew, have become larger, more common and less predictable since 1968. In particular, there have been large late summer and autumn growths of blue-green algae (principally *Microcystis*). At Blagdon, worsening conditions resulted in an exceptional growth of *Microcystis* in 1972.

Both lakes are maintained artificially as trout *Salmo* fisheries. Other fish include eels *Anguilla anguilla*, sticklebacks (Gasterosteidae) and gudgeon *Gobio gobio*. At Chew, roach built up to a peak population in 1964-65 and subsequently suffered a serious decline, due probably to a heavy infestation with *Lingula intestinalis* (Wilson 1971). Sufficient healthy breeding roach were left to produce very large shoals of fry in the late summer and autumn of subsequent years. Since the early 1970s, however, perch have been colonising the lake, and shoals of perch fry appear to be replacing the roach fry in autumn (Wilson *et al.* 1975b). The presence of these large shoals provides one of the underlying ornithological differences between Chew and Blagdon. Since about 1967, a large late summer/early autumn moult gathering of Great Crested Grebes has become a regular feature (400-500, though up to 660), Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* (which feed on larger fish) have become numerous in winter (60-80) and Goosanders *Mergus merganser* have also become common winter visitors (40-60). In contrast, Blagdon generally fails to produce anything but minimal numbers of these three species. Little Grebes also gather at Chew in good numbers in autumn (50-70, though sometimes over 100) and occasionally at Blagdon, presumably relying more on fish at this time of year than their more normal summer diet of invertebrates.

Breeding

Annual fluctuations

Censuses of trilling Little Grebes and subsequent counts of broods indicated a summering population in normal years of 13-27 pairs. Trilling adults were censused from March to May, but this was not a foolproof method as pairs would frequently move territory as falling water levels made original territories unsuitable. In two of the ten years, however, 1973 and 1976, the water failed to reach its normal summer level, leaving the normally emergent vegetation high and dry. In these years, only four and eight pairs were recorded (with four broods in each), whereas Great Crested Grebes failed to breed at all. The few successful pairs of Littles managed to nest on three small pools which maintained constant levels. The annual brood totals are shown in fig. 1. They varied between four and 28, with an average of 12.9. In good years at least, some pairs were probably at least double-brooded. Over the ten years, a total of 129 Little Grebe broods compared with 343 broods of Great Crested, the latter therefore outnumbering the former by $2\frac{2}{3}:1$.

At Chew, water level seems to be the main factor in determining whether a breeding season is good, bad or indifferent. The Little Grebes have to gauge their nesting between the emergence of suitable vegetation and the falling water levels; ideal conditions, therefore, generally do not occur until mid or late summer. The best nesting seasons are generally in cool, wet summers. In such years (such as 1971 and 1979), water levels remain high well into August, allowing the grebes enough time to incubate or to produce replacement clutches and even second broods. Thus, in 1971, when the water remained high well into September, a record 28 broods was recorded. Conversely, the dry years of 1973 and 1976 have already been noted as being particularly bad.

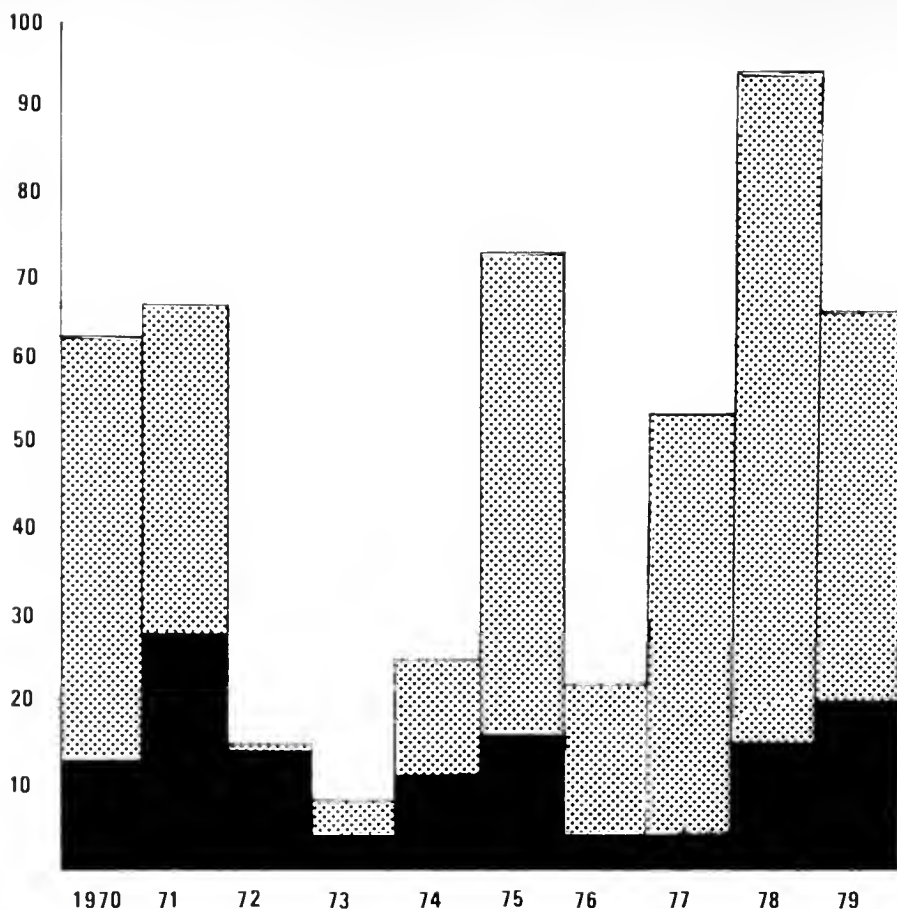


Fig. 1. Numbers of broods of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (black) and maximum August-September moult counts (stippled) at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1970-79. (1971 moult count based on estimate: high water levels made counting difficult)

Simmons (1974) noted that food shortage and water clarity will affect Great Crested Grebes. In 1972, no young Great Crested Grebes were hatched, despite normal water levels, and several adults were found dead during the summer. A food shortage would seem to be the best explanation, presumably related to the severe deoxygenation experienced in that year, and Simmons (1974) noted 1972 as being particularly poor for roach. Little Grebes, however, appeared to be relatively unaffected, presumably because they could rely more on insects and larvae during the breeding season (*BWP*), though moulting numbers later were well below normal (fig. 1), reinforcing the belief that there is then a greater dependence on fish.

Breeding numbers of Great Crested Grebes at Chew also vary considerably, having good years, such as 1970 (about 74 broods), 1974 (69 broods) and 1979 (49 broods), and very poor years, such as 1972, 1973 and 1976 (no broods). In other years, such as 1977, conditions may be ideal early in the year, but, with very rapidly falling water levels, grebes that wait too long may be caught out. In that year, 33 broods of Great Cresteds was below average, while only four broods of Littles were recorded. In such years, as a last attempt to produce young, grebes will, towards the end of the season, sometimes nest in ridiculously open and vulnerable situations.

Timing of the breeding season

The problems of censusing broods are many. Very young Little Grebes, in

particular, are difficult to locate, as they stay in the nest for the first week and the parents carry them on their backs until they are about 12 days old (*BWP*). Adults also build auxiliary brood platforms, and the species is naturally secretive anyway. It is difficult, therefore, to gauge the approximate hatching dates. In an attempt to overcome this, each new brood which I located was categorised as either 'small', 'medium' or 'large'. 'Small' young were judged to be younger than two weeks, 'medium' two to four weeks, and 'large' over four weeks. Thus, approximate hatching dates could be estimated. Such a method may be crude, but the resulting graph (fig. 2) gives a clear indication of the main hatching time in half-monthly periods.

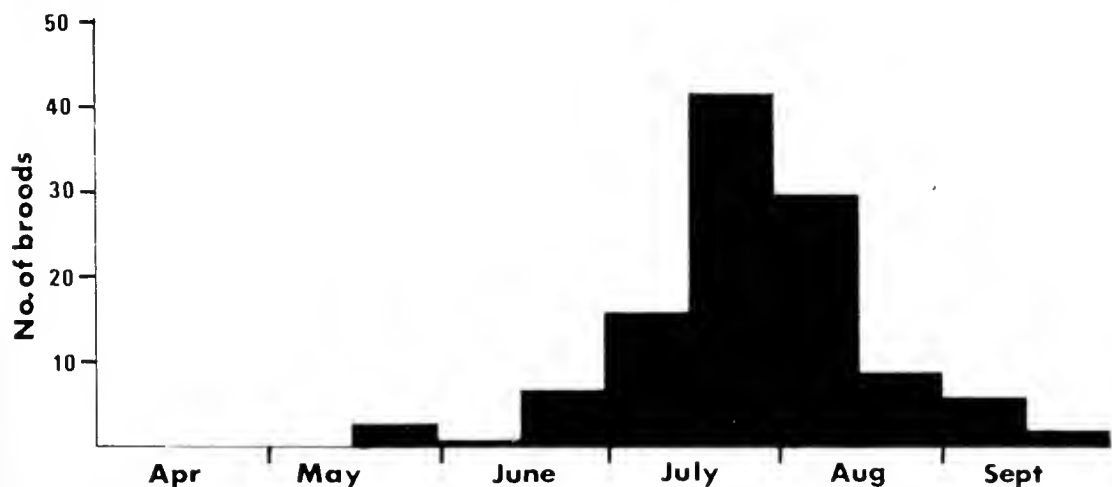


Fig. 2. Estimated hatching dates of broods of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* in half-monthly periods, Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1971-79

At Chew, late-summer hatching is obviously normal. Few broods appear before the end of June, the largest number appearing during the second half of July and the first half of August. It is interesting to note that eight broods were judged to have hatched in September (the latest being two 'small' broods discovered on 30th September 1979).

For comparison, a plot of approximate hatching dates of Great Crested Grebe shows a basically similar if somewhat more protracted season (fig. 3). Broods before the middle of May are rare and most seem to hatch in late June to early August, with a large peak, as with the Little Grebe, at the end of July. Early summer weather may be influential in the timing. Some seasons, such as 1974 and 1975, are early (these producing the smaller peak in the second half of June), while cool wet summers such as 1971, 1978 and 1979 are later.

The Chew breeding season is obviously rather late, illustrated by the fact that, in most years, migrant juveniles from outside the area arrive at the lake in early July. Most appear from 6th-8th onwards, though, in 1972, one was seen as early as 28th June. They gradually increase during the month, with a maximum of 12 seen in late July 1971, these birds attaching themselves to the flocks of moulting adults. On 9th August 1980, one was actually seen displaying (head shaking) to an adult! These individuals have obviously hatched early in the year (at least as early as April) and presumably dispersed soon after fledging. They appear at Chew, therefore, when local birds are still incubating or tending small young.

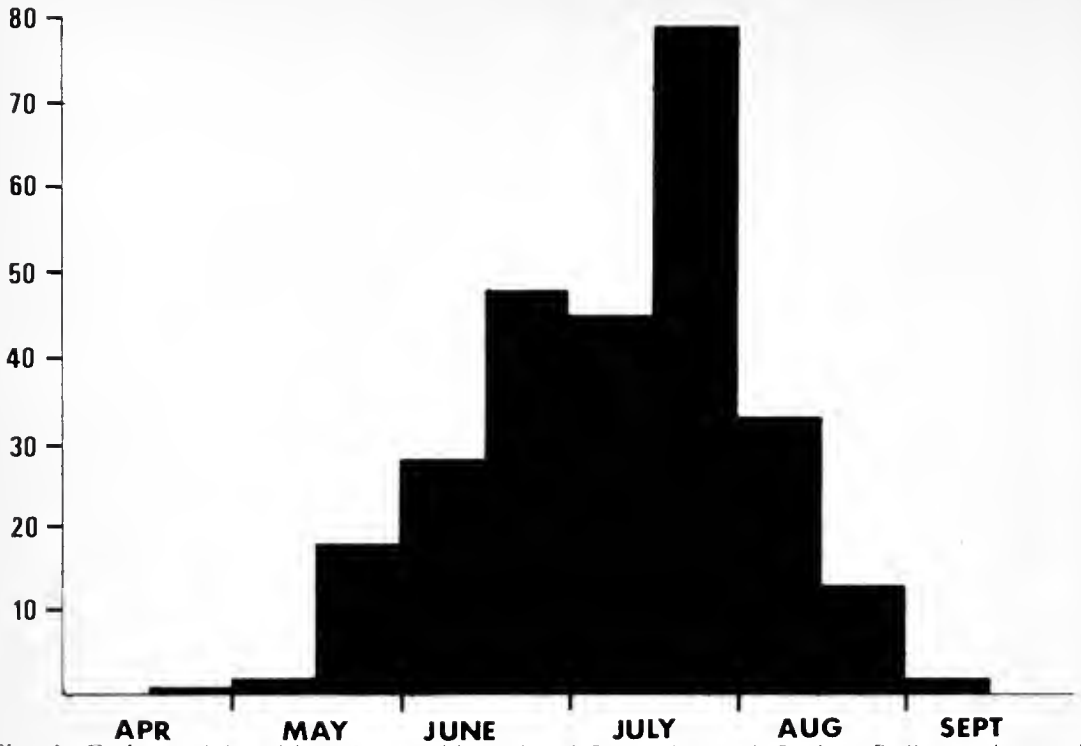


Fig. 3. Estimated hatching dates of broods of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*, in half-monthly periods, Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1971-79

Simmons (1974) made a lengthy study of the adaptations in the reproductive biology of the Great Crested Grebe, and this was fortunately based largely on observations made at Chew. Presumably many of the factors affecting this species will also affect the Little Grebe, especially since it appears from casual observations that Chew Little Grebes feed larger young mainly on fish fry, to a much greater extent than is indicated in *BIWP*. He described the Great Crested Grebe as an opportunistic nester and, in England, the breeding season is extremely protracted, normally lasting seven to eight months. The exact time of breeding often shows considerable variation, not only from year to year and from water to water, but even among different pairs living on the same lake. Simmons considered that the availability of cover for safe nesting appears to be of prime importance in determining the Great Crested Grebe's timetable; but the start of egg-laying is also influenced by other local factors, such as water level and weather. Simmons noted that most broods originating from the main reedbed at Chew did not appear on the main lake until July or August (thereby fitting in well with my observations). He considered prey size to be an influential factor. Because the adults at Chew relied on fish less than 7.5 cm long, they correspondingly had to spend much more time on average in fishing than grebes elsewhere which feed on larger fish. Breeding was therefore probably delayed until the days were long enough to give more time for feeding. It seems obvious, however, that, at Chew, both Little and Great Crested Grebes must gauge their breeding cycles to correspond with (a) the appearance of the large shoals of roach and/or perch fry in late summer, and (b) the luxuriant midsummer growth of emergent vegetation, which reaches its ideal suitability when there is a small reduction in the water level. In 'normal' years, conditions at Chew are ideal, but reduced success will result if the finely balanced conditions are upset in any way.

Brood sizes

As already noted, Little Grebe broods, particularly young ones, are difficult to census. Most are either ‘medium’ or ‘large’ in size when first seen. Any attempt at analysing brood sizes is therefore fraught with difficulties. With Great Crested Grebes, broods of two or more are regularly divided into two sub-groups, with each parent feeding its own ‘in-chick(s)’ (Simmons 1974). Little Grebe families may also subdivide, but the extent of full subdivisions is uncertain (*BWP*). Subdivision of broods causes difficulties when censusing, as (a) the total number of broods may be overestimated and (b) the number of young in a brood may be underestimated.

The average brood sizes at Chew during 1971-79 must, therefore, be treated with caution, but nevertheless the figures are useful indicators. They are obviously more representative of productivity than of numbers of young actually produced at hatching, assuming that greatest mortality occurs in the early days when chicks are presumably more susceptible to inclement weather and possibly to predation. Broods of one or two are most frequent for both species and broods of four or more are comparatively rare (table 1). Over the nine-year period, the average size of 116 Little Grebe broods was 1.76, which is very similar to the corresponding figure of 1.73 obtained for 269 broods of Great Crested Grebes. Corresponding figures obtained on various small lakes and reservoirs on Anglesey in August 1976 were 1.68 for Little Grebe (19 broods) and 1.58 for Great Crested Grebe (12 broods), though it should be noted that the summer of 1976 was exceptionally hot, so these figures may not be completely representative. The Chew and Anglesey Great Crested Grebe figures tie in very well, therefore, with a lengthy series quoted for both Britain and Europe by Simmons (1974) and also the series in *BWP*. The Little Grebe figures also correspond well with those noted in *BWP*, which quoted mean brood size at hatching as 4.6 (seven broods) and at fledging as 1.8 (31 broods), indicating a 40% survival rate.

Table 1. Distribution (%) of brood sizes of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1971-79

	Brood sizes:				
	1	2	3	4	5
Little Grebe (116 broods)	47.4%	32.8%	17.2%	1.7%	0.9%
Great Crested Grebe (269 broods)	41.6%	45.4%	11.1%	1.9%	0

Seasonal fluctuations

Winter, spring and summer

Fig. 4 shows the average maximum monthly counts of Little Grebes during 1970-79. Owing to the difficulties of counting grebes in summer, figures for April to August inclusive are based mainly on estimates of numbers of breeding pairs plus the number of young recorded as they appear. The accuracy of this method is confirmed by the September figure, which, based entirely on actual counts, is remarkably similar to the calculated figures for the previous two months.

At Chew, the Little Grebe is almost exclusively a summer visitor (fig. 4). Winter numbers are somewhat variable, with usually fewer than five, but



Fig. 4. Average maximum monthly counts of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1970-79. (Figures for April-August based largely on calculations of numbers of breeding pairs plus young)

only one to three are generally present in January or February, representing a vestigial wintering population. The average February maximum is only 13% of the average August peak, but, in some years, such as 1979, the February total may be as little as 2% of the previous autumn's maximum. There is, however, a tendency for higher numbers to occur following a good breeding season, as in 1972, when up to 33 remained into January following the excellent summer of 1971 when 67 young were recorded. Even in that year, however, numbers fell to only four in mid February. Great Crested Grebes show a similar decline in mid winter (fig. 5), with a February average of only 80, though in some winters very few may be present, as in 1977/78, when numbers fell to only five on 26th January, and in 1978/79, when there were only three on 28th January (0.7% of the previous autumn maximum); this recent trend towards very low late-winter numbers continued in 1979/80 and 1980/81. As with the Little Grebe, winter numbers vary and, following a good breeding season, higher numbers may remain. For example, the two highest February counts (226 in 1971 and 119 in 1975) followed exceptional breeding years.

A few Little Grebes usually begin to arrive in territory in February, though appreciable numbers do not begin to appear until the beginning or the middle of March; in 1971 (the good breeding year), however, 14 were present by 15th February. The breeding adults are gradually augmented during the summer as the young appear, with highest numbers considered to be present at the end of the summer, from July to September.

The autumn moult

Great Crested Grebes undertake a large late summer/early autumn moult migration to Chew, with a September average maximum of 424 (fig. 5), though up to 655 were recorded in 1970, following the excellent breeding season. Numbers build up during July and fall rapidly from November through December to the February minimum (see Simmons 1962, Vini-combe 1976). Little Grebes also gather to moult at the lake following breeding, but, unlike the Great Cresteds, there is no evidence for an appreciable influx from outside the area. As already noted, post-breeding counts are generally similar to estimates of adults and young at the end of

the breeding season. Maximum numbers of both species correspond, therefore, with the occurrence in late summer and autumn of the large shoals of roach and perch fry.

Little Grebes, like other grebes, shed their flight feathers simultaneously, but there is much variation in timing of moult, dependent on the end of the breeding cycle. Wing feathers are moulted between July and October, with the main period being August to September; they are flightless for three to four weeks (*BWP*). In normal years, moulting numbers at Chew reach 50-70 (fig. 1), though larger numbers have occasionally been recorded (e.g. 147 on 20th September 1959, 103 on 5th October 1969, 94 on 16th September 1978, and 125 on 17th August 1980). In the last year at least, these high counts were related to exceptionally good breeding success. Numbers then usually show a fairly steep but gradual decline from late September through to December or January, when only the vestigial winter population remains (fig. 4).

Peak autumn counts are generally in September, when Little Grebes become readily visible as the water falls below the level of the emergent vegetation. At this time, they are easily counted as they gather into small flotillas, with much contact calling. In some years, however, appreciable autumn numbers fail to develop. In 1973 and 1976, for example, following the low water levels and poor breeding success, September maxima were only eight and 11 respectively. The unusual events of 1972 have already been noted and, in that year, the maximum September count was 15, but they gathered at Blagdon Lake, where up to 74 were counted. Similarly, the Great Crested Grebe moult concentration reached only 205, while Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*, which normally also moult at Chew, gathered at Blagdon, where there was a record 835 in August. These high counts at Blagdon occurred despite severe deoxygenation and a large bloom of blue-green algae, but it seems that conditions at Chew were even worse. It does seem possible, however, that some Chew Little Grebes may regularly moult at Blagdon, where moult counts sometimes exceed possible breeding numbers (three to nine pairs), especially during 1973-75. The richer variety and abundance of the littoral fauna may be the reason for this, moulting Little Grebes at Blagdon perhaps placing less reliance on fish than those at Chew.

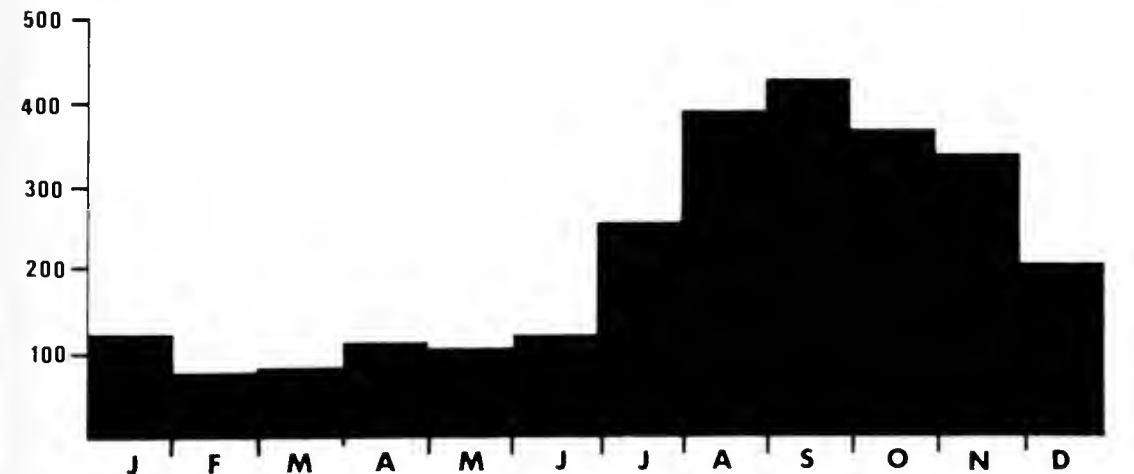


Fig. 5. Average maximum monthly counts of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 1970-79

Population variations on Anglesey

Anglesey is a suitable area for studying fluctuations of waterbirds as it is to some extent isolated, adjacent mainland Wales being high and mountainous. Little Grebes are quite common on the numerous lakes and reservoirs of Anglesey, but they are absent from much of the adjacent Llyn Peninsula and northwest Gwynedd (Hope Jones & Dare 1976). I recorded Little Grebes on 16 Anglesey lakes between August 1976 and February 1977, with breeding proved at ten. They were present on many waters too small for Great Crested Grebes, which were recorded on nine.

Total monthly numbers on Anglesey are summarised in fig. 6. The highest numbers (at least 85) were found in August and September, when some gathered to moult on the two large reservoirs, Llyn Alaw (up to 29) and Cefni Reservoir (up to 23). Total numbers fell in October, when there was a build-up on salt and brackish water, reaching a maximum of 22 in November. The main localities were the Cefni Estuary (up to six) and the Inland Sea (up to 16). Saltwater numbers then declined to 12 in December, nine in January and seven in February. The late autumn/early winter build-up on saltwater presumably represents a local movement from freshwater, but it is not known to what extent it might represent a more general passage through the area. Whatever the answer, most birds moved on during the winter.

As at Chew, total numbers reached a low point early in the New Year, with only 35 recorded in January, 41.2% of the estimated August total, somewhat higher than the corresponding figure of 13% for Chew. The

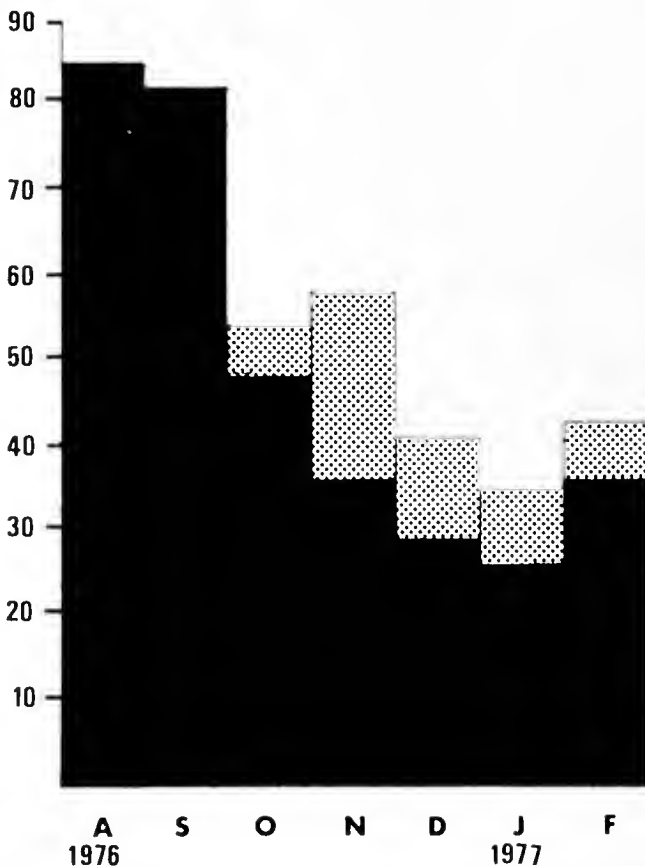


Fig. 6. Numbers of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on Anglesey, Gwynedd, August 1976 to February 1977 (freshwater, black; salt/brackish water, stippled)

majority of Little Grebes, therefore, left Anglesey in midwinter, with only a few (10.6% of the August total) on saltwater in January. Numbers began to recover in February, when the first trilling was heard on several waters from which Little Grebes had been absent during the winter.

Discussion

These two sets of data clearly show that the Little Grebe can basically be regarded as a partial migrant and a summer visitor to the areas discussed. This is perhaps surprising, as both areas are close to the western seaboard and so are relatively mild. Presumably, the grebes leave their summer haunts in response to (a) a decrease in food supply and (b) possible freezing, though it is difficult to suggest which may be the more important. At Chew, by midwinter, the fry will have declined in abundance and grown too large to be exploited successfully by the grebes. Also, the fish are much less concentrated, with the high late-winter water levels, and feeding efficiency may be further reduced by increased winter turbidity. Severe freezing at Chew is rare, as only in the 1978/79 winter was it prolonged. With the unpredictability of British winters, however, Little Grebes may have an inherent unwillingness to remain on their breeding areas and risk the possibility of freezing.

Where then do Little Grebes go in winter? It seems likely that some at least move on to rivers and streams which are less susceptible to freezing. It is difficult, however, to obtain any impression of numbers on rivers in winter. In Avon, few are generally reported, though small numbers do occur along the River Avon itself. Other reservoirs in the area hold vestigial populations similar to, or even smaller than, those at Chew. As on Anglesey, it is clear that most leave the area completely.

64. Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Shropshire, June 1978 (R. J. C. Blewitt)



Perhaps the most obvious explanation would be a move to salt or brackish areas along the south coast of England. Despite small wintering numbers, however, a move to the coast was not the main solution to the winter exodus on Anglesey, although nearby English south coast counties do record a winter influx. In Cornwall, for example, reference to the 1970-79 annual reports indicated about nine areas which have, at times, held ten to 20 wintering Little Grebes. Smaller numbers are widespread; in 1974, for example, they were recorded at 20 localities in the county in winter. Moore (1969) stated that the Little Grebe is a fairly common winter visitor to all the estuaries in Devon, but it is scarce as a breeding bird owing to a shortage of habitat. Reference to the 1970-78 annual reports indicated about 12 areas recording maxima of ten to 25, and consistently higher numbers were noted on the Kingsbridge Estuary: up to 30-40, with 70 on 2nd January 1972. In January 1949, as many as 100 were present on the Yealm. In Dorset, Boys (1973) noted that winter concentrations of ten or more are frequent, and reference to a selection of recent annual reports indicated three main coastal areas, each holding perhaps 20-40 (occasionally up to 50). The East Fleet is the most important area, though 217 farther west near Abbotsbury on 16th December 1961 was very exceptional. Cohen & Taverner (1972) noted a marked movement to coastal waters outside the breeding season in Hampshire, and a selection of recent annual reports showed that the Little Grebe is a numerous winter visitor, with about a dozen areas holding, at various times, maxima of ten to 40. Two areas consistently hold higher numbers: the Eling/Redbridge area, Southampton (sometimes 40-50), and the River Medina, Isle of Wight (up to 65 in January 1972). The Hampshire rivers also hold good winter numbers, several hundred probably remaining on the 100km of the Test system, where 150 pairs have been estimated in the breeding season (Cohen & Taverner 1972). Coastal gatherings in Hampshire apparently disperse in March and April, and, although the first may arrive in July or August, the real build-up begins in September. It was interesting to note that, in 1973, wintering numbers reached a peak in October/November, with numbers dropping off later in the winter, perhaps indicating onward movement (cf. the Anglesey figures).

It seems obvious, therefore, that many British Little Grebes winter along the south coast, but, assuming that a winter freshwater exodus is typical, are the numbers recorded here in winter sufficient to account for the large number presumably leaving the breeding waters? It seems likely that at least some British Little Grebes move even farther afield and winter on the Continent. It is, therefore, relevant to note that *BWP* records individuals ringed in England in September to November and recovered in France in December and March, but did not consider them to fit into the 'normal' pattern as suggested by other recoveries. Only more extensive ringing, although difficult, would confirm possible movements into France, or conceivably even beyond. It also seems possible that some (such as those on Anglesey) may move west into Ireland.

As a final point, it may be relevant to note that I have gained the rather

subjective impression that the movement of grebes, and other waterbirds such as Coots *Fulica atra*, is strongly linked to the phases of the moon, greatest activity occurring during the waxing moon, nearing full, particularly on clear, calm nights. It seems that the birds need moon-lit nights, not only for orientation, but also to enable the location of waters reflecting in the moonlight below.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Mr E. G. Wright and the Bristol Waterworks Company for allowing unrestricted access to the reservoir enclosures. I am also grateful to J. V. Boys, R. M. Curber, R. J. Senior and Bernard King for their help, and to BK for much encouragement over the years.

Summary

The breeding and seasonal fluctuations of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* are discussed, based on counts made during 1970-79 at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, augmented by counts made during the winter of 1976/77 on Anglesey, Gwynedd. Wherever possible, the information is compared with corresponding details for Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. Annual fluctuations in breeding numbers are related to a large extent to water level. The breeding season for both species is protracted, but most broods hatch in late summer, late July/early August for Little and late June to early August for Great Crested, both with a pronounced peak in the second half of July. Most broods were of one or two young, with an average at Chew of 1.76 for Little and 1.73 for Great Crested.

At Chew, the Little Grebe is mainly a summer visitor, with only a small, vestigial winter population. Breeding Little Grebes arrive mainly from mid March, and the largest numbers occur in July, August and September, with the addition of the summer's young. They remain to moult, mainly during August and September, when they become readily visible on the lake, but there is no evidence for an appreciable outside influx, unlike the Great Crested Grebe. Numbers rapidly decline to reach a January/February low.

Corresponding figures from Anglesey tie in well with those from Chew, though proportionally more (41% compared with 13%) remain in midwinter. Some moved onto salt or brackish water in October, with a peak in November, but these too largely moved on by midwinter.

Possible wintering areas are discussed. It is thought likely that some may move onto rivers and streams, and many to the south coast, but it is also suggested that some at least may move farther afield and winter on the Continent.

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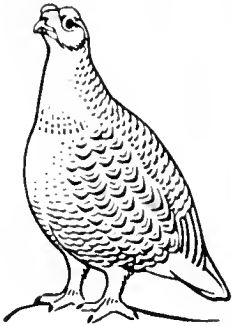
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The number of entries for this year's competition remained at a high level (128 transparencies by 50 photographers) and the general standard was exceptionally good and seems to improve each year: there were almost no dud entries this time. The judges found it hard to select a short list from a final 21 and even more difficult to put the last eight into sequence. This was compounded by the competition's requirements for judging of the photographs not only on technical excellence, but also on originality and scientific interest, and aesthetic appeal and artistic composition.

The final placings were:

1st	King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i> with Eiders <i>S. mollissima</i>	Dennis Goutts
2nd=	Flock of Brent Geese <i>Branta bernicla</i>	Dr M. R. Hill
2nd=	Two female Hen Harriers <i>Circus cyaneus</i> at nest	Nick Picozzi
4th	Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i> sunbathing	A. T. Moffett
5th	Redshanks <i>Tringa totanus</i> mating	Oene Moedt
6th=	Snipes <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> at nest	Dr Edmund Fellowes
6th=	Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> sunbathing	A. T. Moffett
6th=	Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i> in snow	Roger Wilmshurst

The other short-listed photographs were: Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (Dr Edmund Fellowes), American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (Mike Thurner), Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* (R. Tidman), Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* (D. Hughes), Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (Barry Walker), Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (Philip Perry), Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* (Dennis Green), Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (Gordon Langsbury), Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (Jean-Philippe Siblet), Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (P. R. Clarke), Jay *Garrulus glandarius* (J. Russell), Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (M. B. Withers) and Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (R. J. C. Blewitt).

The top five photographs are shown in plates 65-69.

Dennis Coutts's winning photograph (plate 65) is quite outstanding: by any standards, it is a delightful group of birds, the identical plumage of the drake Eiders providing a repetitive pattern contrasting with the dull ducks and the immature drake, the tight flock neatly framed, with the drake King Eider, with his grey head and brilliant orange bill, forming the jewel in the centre. A truly superb picture, set off by the green patterns in the water. This group was photographed from a pilot launch in Sullom Voe, Shetland, during a photographic expedition to show the operation of pilot boats and tugs controlling tanker movements at Sullom Voe oil terminal.

The next two photographs we could not separate and have placed joint second. They are very different. Geese are often photographed in flight, but we rarely see a shot such as that produced by Dr M. R. Hill. These Brent Geese (plate 66) are coming in to land in surprising numbers (usually they are photographed taking off, disturbed by the photographer), the skeins of sharply focused birds making a delightful pattern of crescents in the sky. Many birders will recognise the background, which shows the habitat well.

The other second-placed photograph, Nick Picozzi's shot of two female Hen Harriers attending the same nest (plate 67), must surely be unique, and he has made the most of his opportunity. The 'gardening' is restrained, just enough to reveal the nest, at the same time nicely framing the main subjects, which are in sharp focus and epitomise the co-operation that must have existed between the two birds. Nick Picozzi heard about this nest and—as he says, 'suspending disbelief'—checked on the report. The birds' own chicks hatched (four of ten eggs from the two hens), but died, as they were very light. He fostered-in two chicks, however, which were then fed and brooded by both hens, with one (the older of the two) also hunting; the



65. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR, 1981. Male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* with Eiders *S. mollissima*, Shetland, March 1981 (Dennis Coutts), Olympus OM2n with 500 mm f8 Tamron lens; Ektachrome 200



66. Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* flying in to Cley Marshes, Norfolk, March 1981 (M. R. Hill). Canon AE1 with Canon 135 mm lens; 1/500 at f3.5; Kodachrome 64



67. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* at nest, Orkney, July 1981 (N. Picozzi). Nikon FE camera with 135 mm Nikkor lens; 1/125 at f4/5.6; Kodachrome 64

adult male only rarely attended the nest. In due course, both chicks fledged.

A. T. Moffett is to be congratulated on gaining both fourth place and an equal sixth place. His wonderful photograph of a Green Woodpecker sunbathing (plate 68), shows the bird, as so often is the case when so



68. Juvenile Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* sunbathing, West Midlands, summer 1981 (A. T. Moffett).
Olympus OM1 with 300mm Zuiko lens, Kodachrome 64



69. Redshanks *Tringa totanus* mating, Netherlands, April 1981 (Oene Moedt). Nikon FE with 400mm f5.6 IF ED Nikkor plus $\times 1.4$ Nikkor converter; Ektachrome 200

occupied, panting with its bill slightly open. We were impressed not only by the good composition, but also by the planning that must have been necessary to obtain both this picture and the companion one, of a juvenile Wren also sunbathing; neither species is often photographed when engaged in this behaviour. In fact, A. T. Moffett spent over a year concentrating on photographing Green Woodpeckers, the shots of which he is most proud being those of the juvenile sunbathing.

Forward planning also went into Oene Moedt's dramatic picture of the mating Redshanks (plate 69). Full of life, all in sharp focus, the white underwing of the male shown to perfection, this is another photograph where the shutter was pressed at exactly the right moment in what is usually only a brief encounter. Oene Moedt used a purpose-built hide on the muddy border of a 3 m-wide ditch about 50 cm below the level of the grass, so that waders haunting the meadows could be photographed at eye-level.

We were delighted by the entries for this year's competition, particularly by their very high standard, which made the judging so difficult. So, if you were a 'near miss' this year, or indeed did not receive a mention, do not be discouraged, but get out into the field and photograph your entry for next year's 'Bird Photograph of the Year' competition!

ERIC HOSKING, R. J. CHANDLER and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Points of view

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

1. County bird reports: what use are they?

Most birdwatchers, including myself, dutifully submit records to the county report editors every year. Why do we do it? Well, it is satisfying to see one's personal observations appearing in print, especially when one's initials are put alongside some rare bird. But I don't think this should ever be the main reason. Self-congratulation hardly justifies the enormous effort that goes into these publications. No, I am sure many also feel that they are contributing to a fund of ornithological knowledge by performing this ritual. We then have to ask whether, in the event, this is likely.

Unfortunately, I think it is generally unlikely. The trouble lies in the quality of the data. General countywide coverage is usually haphazard in the extreme, contingent on such highly variable factors as the location, experience and mobility of observers, interest in particular species or localities, and even whether or not observers send in their records! Long-term upward trends in numbers of observers and identification skills is tending to obscure actual population changes. Correction for these factors is not always done routinely. Moreover, report editors have to exercise discretion, as they have limited space. Common species too often get relegated to an appendix, where they suffer from institutionalised neglect.

It is hardly surprising that national survey organisers adopt much more systematic and disciplined approaches. The country is divided to ensure even coverage and a standard methodology is adhered to. Synchronised observation solves a lot of problems. In a few cases, such as inland seabird wrecks, county bird reports *are* useful sources, but only because these are the kind of species that get recorded anyway. Even here, it is noteworthy that organisers usually feel they have to make a special appeal, implying that they cannot rely on the county reports to provide all the necessary data.

So what use are county reports? I believe their potential usefulness is not being realised. More attention should be given to standardising recording procedures so that national summaries can be produced routinely. Stylistic changes may be necessary: for example, more use of tabular presentation of large amounts of data. Perhaps even the need for *annual* reports could be questioned. All this will require much co-ordination and hard work, but, ultimately, improvements in the quality of county bird reports would be reflected in increased sales. Will one of the national ornithological bodies care to start the ball rolling?

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Fifty years ago . . .

'On 11th August 1931, and the next few days, a CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*) created much interest by taking up a position each evening on the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral. . . . An injured WOODCOCK (*Scolopax r. rusticola*) was picked up alive on 11th April in Paddington. . . . On 29th November 1930, a LANDRAIL (*Crex crex*) was found exhausted in Leicester Square.' A. HOLTE MACPHERSON. (*Brit. Birds* 25: 356, May 1932)

Mystery photographs

65 This quite striking bird probably didn't immediately 'click'—it certainly didn't with me! It is obviously a tern, and it does not look large. But which one has such a bold pat-



tern? The relatively large head, large eye and bulky wing do not suggest a marsh tern *Chlidonias*, and in any case the contrasted blackish lesser coverts forming the carpal bar indicate a sea tern *Sterna* in an immature or adult winter plumage. The amount of white on the crown is too great for either Common *S. hirundo* or Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*. Although juvenile Arctic has whitish secondaries, it has less white greater coverts and less black on the forewing, whereas juvenile Common, which does have the blackish carpal bar, does not shade to white on the hind-wing, nor does the blackish colour extend right around the leading edge of the outer wing onto the outer primaries. Could the blackish head patch indicate Forster's Tern *S. forsteri* in either its black-billed winter or its juvenile plumage? It seems too extensive and diffuse; also, the wing pattern is wrong—and so is the shape. In fact, that odd, chunky shape, with wings which look over-large and carpals splayed, round body, large head and big eye do not comfortably fit any of the larger species; it belongs only to the Little Tern *S. albigrons*. Juvenile Little Terns have a good deal of brown on the head, blurring the pattern, and dark, V-shaped subterminal bars on the mantle feathers and scapulars, whereas this bird, photographed in September, has already gained a whiter crown and largely clean grey upperparts through its partial autumn moult, and is now in its first-winter plumage. The wings remain contrasted, however, blackish at the front and clear white on most of the greater coverts, secondaries and inner primaries, giving an echo of the familiar W wing-patterns of several small gulls *Larus*. Note, too, the white tips beneath all but the outermost primaries of the far wing—there is a dark outer wedge, but not the dark trailing edge of a Common or an Arctic Tern. Both winter adult and first-winter Little Terns tend to have black bills, giving a quite different expression from the well-known black-tipped yellow bill and neat white forehead of the adult in summer. These plumages are surprisingly poorly described and illustrated in the literature, and it is therefore all the more valuable to have had the opportunity to publish this photograph. It was taken by Ed Mackrill in New Jersey, USA, in September 1980.

R. A. HUME



70. Mystery photograph 66. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Dark eye-patch of Fulmar M. Densley's paper on Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 23-28) drew attention to the structure and possible function of dark, bristle-like feathers surrounding the eyes of that species in winter plumage. A close examination of the dark eye-patch of the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* reveals a somewhat similar structure: each dark feather has the central rachis bare, forming a bristle-like outer section (plate 71). Ian Lyster of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, has drawn a single feather, greatly enlarged, from the eye-patch of a Fulmar (fig. 1). He also examined a range of seabirds of various ages and seasonal plumages in the museum's skin collection and found a similar

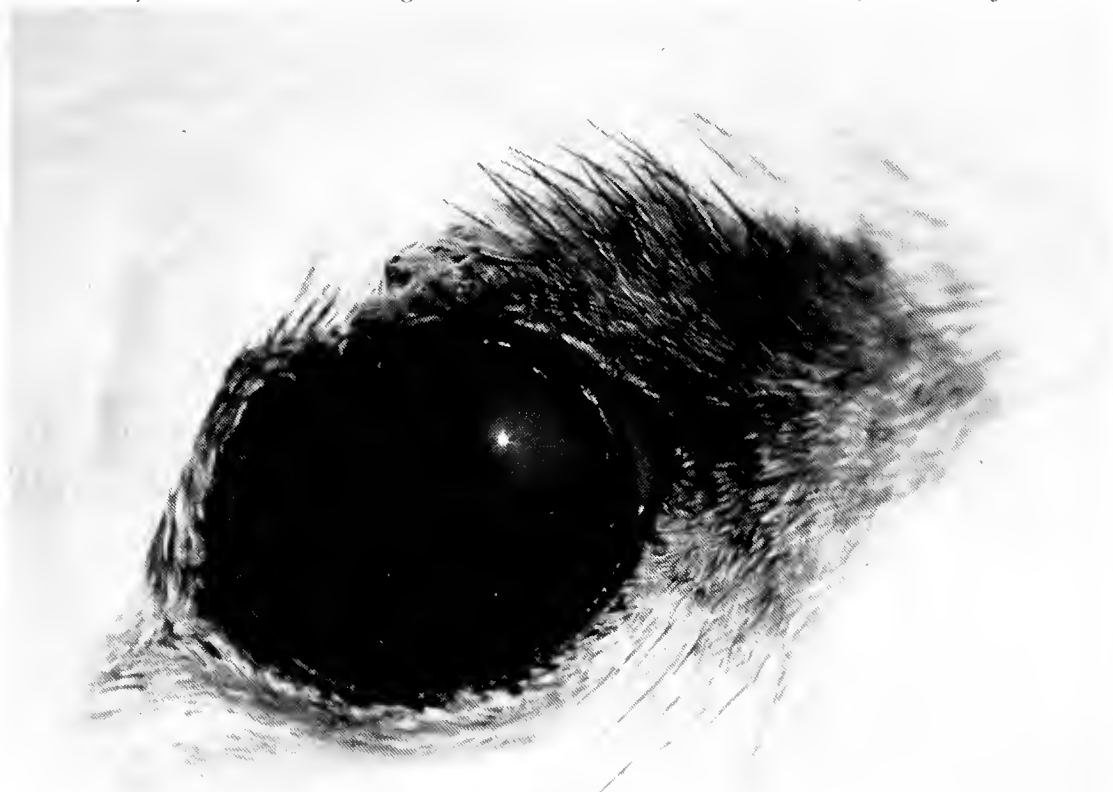




Fig. 1. Single feather from eye-patch of Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (Ian Lyster)

bristle-like condition around the eyes of most gulls (Laridae), some terns (Sternidae) and skuas (Stercorariidae), but not of auks (Alcidae); some waders show a trace of it, but none can be detected on phalaropes *Phalaropus*. On gulls, the bristles can be very obvious on immatures (e.g. Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*), or very scant and weak on some adults (e.g. Herring Gull *L. argentatus*). They are also present on gulls which inhabit warmer waters (e.g. Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyaetus*), but cannot be traced on the tropical Fairy Tern *Gygis alba*. The bristle-like feathers vary slightly in structure from species to species. Their possible function is not particularly obvious: where present, they may act to disturb or reduce the airflow speed over the corneal surface, which may improve vision; where

71. Eye of Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* with dark bristle-like feathers (Bernard Zonfrillo)



also pigmented, they may reduce glare and have a certain thermal retention value, as Mr Densley suggested. There seem to be few, if any, common factors which explain their presence and/or absence satisfactorily.

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Water Rail sheltering inside rabbit burrow At 14.00 GMT on 18th January 1979, at Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve, Aberdeen, I saw a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* emerge from a burrow at a warren where a ferret *Mustela furo* had been released in pursuit of rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. The rail walked about 3m from the entrance before flying off into nearby rushes *Juncus*. At the time, there was complete snow and ice cover; I surmised that the rail may have been either sheltering or intending to roost.

JOHN G. YOUNG

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Field identification of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls While the paper by A. H. Davis and R. J. Prytherch (*Brit. Birds* 69: 281-287) has opened up new ground, I feel that it has also caused some confusion. Individual Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* vary considerably: some have fairly strong, uniformly marked underparts with a deep rich buff ground colour; others are much paler with a strong breast band of streaks, becoming sparser below, creating a pattern similar to that of many Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus*. While some Long-eareds' underparts resemble fig. 1 in Davis & Prytherch, others tend to resemble those of Short-eared, especially in flight. This becomes more confusing because of the variability of Short-eared Owls and the difficulty of seeing a breast-band on some individuals in flight (although Short-eared are very pale below). Although the tail-barring of Short-eared may be in distinctive arrowhead formation, the similarity between the two species in flight in the actual density of barring may be very close (see John Sparks & Tony Soper, 1970, *Owls*: pp. 69 & 87, where both owls show a similar number of dark bars). One of the best features in flight is probably the strongly contrasted barring of the Short-eared's primaries continuing onto the secondaries, together with its strongly blotched wing-coverts. A different 'jizz' is created by the barred primaries of Long-eared changing to finely barred grey secondaries, together with a more uniform forewing. These features are well illustrated by Peter Hayman in *Birds of the World* (1969, vol. 5: 1350) and in *The Birdlife of Britain* (Peter Hayman and Philip Burton, 1979: pp. 153 & 155).

J. B. KEMP

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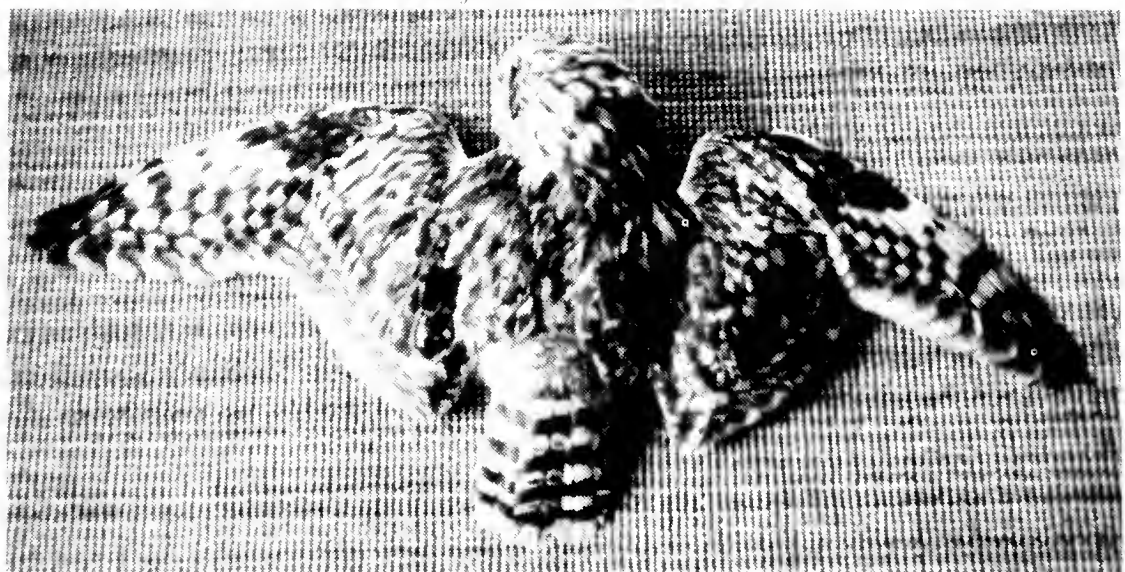
During the autumn of 1978, unprecedented numbers of Short-eared (up to 30) and Long-eared Owls (up to ten) occurred on Fair Isle, Shetland, providing excellent opportunities for studying the identification of the two species. A number of each was trapped for ringing, and, later, several Short-eared found dead through extreme weather enabled a critical examination of the plumage features to be made. The most important characters in flight are the tail and upperwing patterns: Short-eared has a pale buff tail with four or five well defined dark bars contrasting strongly with the

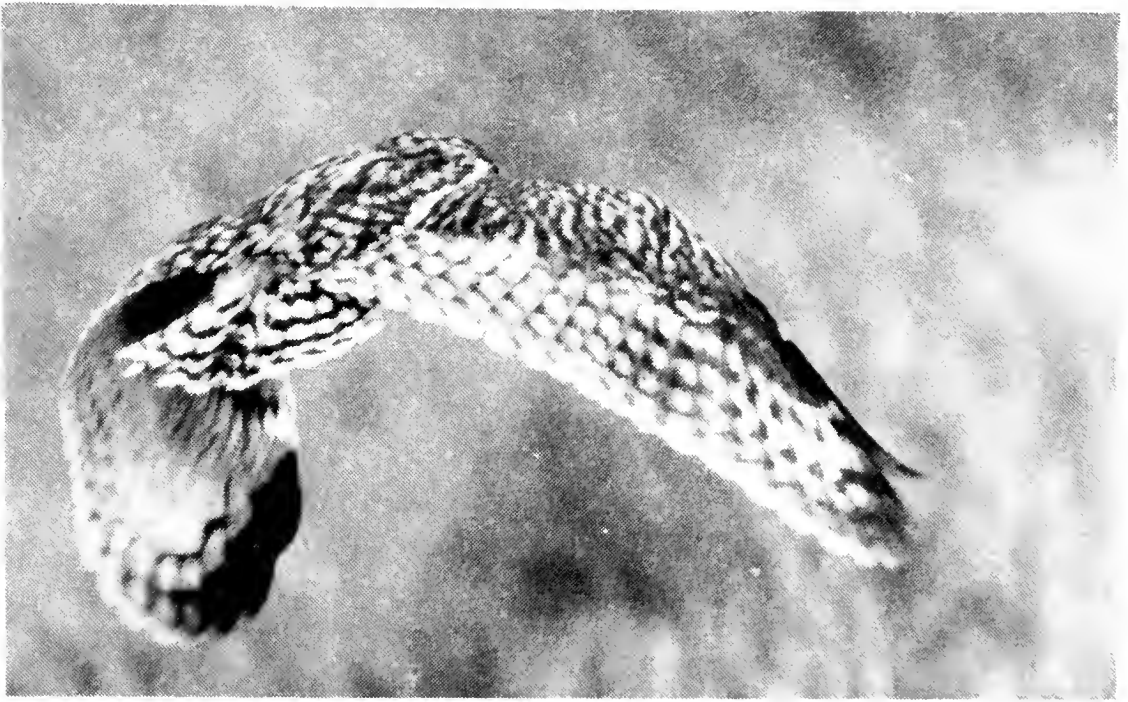


72. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Shetland, October 1978 (I. S. Robertson)

background colour; Long-eared has six to eight narrower and less well defined bars that do not contrast so strongly with the buffish-grey background. These features, and the colour of the carpal patch on the upper-wing (orange in Long-eared, buff in Short-eared), were stressed by Davis & Prytherch. A feature which proved most useful (and is previously undescribed) is the trailing edge of the wing: in Short-eared all remiges but the outer primaries are tipped very pale buff or whitish, forming a clear pale

73. Dead Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Shetland, October 1978 (I. S. Robertson)





74. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Kent, June 1969 (John Holloway)

band on the trailing edge of the upperwing; on Long-eared this feature is entirely absent, the remiges being uniformly greyish-brown with darker bands over their whole length (see plates 72-74). A further point is the difference in iris colour: Short-eared has pale yellow irides, Long-eared bright orange. This feature is surprisingly easy to see when an owl is unexpectedly flushed, as both species have a habit of turning their head to peer at the observer once they are airborne, when the paler face mask of Short-eared is also clearly visible.

IAIN S. ROBERTSON

Myrtle Cottage, Brough, Whalsay, Shetland

Derek Goodwin examined many skins of both species and, with the caveat that, in the field, pale or white markings almost always appear more sharply defined at a little distance, and that such pale colours seem to cover a greater area, than evident with the bird in the hand, has commented as follows: 'Taking tail bars only at or beyond the end of the uppertail-coverts, few Long-eareds seem to have more than five. There is enormous variation in the shape of the bars in both species: in some of the darker Short-eareds, the central rectrices could almost be described as brownish-black with buff spots, but Short-eareds always show strong, sharp contrast between the dark brown 'bars' and the pale buff, whitish-buff, dark buff or orange-buff ground colour; whereas, in Long-eareds, the grey vermiculation invades all (or most of) the buffish areas, destroying the contrast. The carpal patches do not show up well on skins; presumably, they are formed by the basal (but visible) areas of the outer primaries, which do seem consistently brighter (more orangy-looking) in Long-eareds than in Short-eareds (buff, sometimes very pale, sometimes deep brownish-buff, but not bright-looking). The trailing edges are easily overlooked in skins (with folded wings), but most of the secondaries and inner primaries of Short-eareds do have a pale trailing edge which would be conspicuous in the field (although there is much individual variation in the amount and shade of the whitish or buffish tips). Regarding iris colour, the first Short-eared Owl I handled alive had impressive golden-orange irides, and one recently brought in injured has light golden-yellow irides; I feel that iris colour should be used with caution, although the Long-eareds I have seen close to all did have bright orange irides. There is much individual variation, and in general owls with the darkest buff ground colour (both species, but perhaps especially Short-eared) have the most extensive dark markings. Paleness in the field depends much on light and contrast; in skins, Short-eareds vary greatly in the basic colour of underparts: from very pale whitish-buff to dark reddish-buff.' **ENDS**

Letters

Tail-lengths of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls Would A. H. Davis and Robin Prytherch like to comment on the statement in *British Birds* 69: 281-287 that the Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* has a shorter tail than the Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*?

The measurements in *The Handbook* suggest that the Long-eared Owl, the smaller of the two species, has a proportionately longer tail in relation to body length. Hayman (1976, *The Birdlife of Britain*) also stated that the Long-eared Owl has a longer tail, and emphasised the shorter tail of the Short-eared Owl.

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Robin Prytherch and A. H. Davis have replied as follows: 'Yes, it may well be true that the tail of a Long-eared Owl is on average slightly longer than that of a Short-eared Owl. Our paper (*Brit. Birds* 69: 281-287) concentrated, however, on field characters and, as J. B. Kemp suspects, the situation is reversed under field conditions. This is due to two factors: (1) the length of tail extending beyond the trailing edge of the wing, and (2) the width of the wing adjacent to the body. In the field, therefore, the tail of a Long-eared Owl appears to be shorter than that of a Short-eared Owl, and this is emphasised by the difference in wing width. The two sets of measurements of individuals handled by RP (table 1, fig. 1) clarify these points. Field observations suggest that these two individuals were typical'. Eds.

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of single individuals of Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*

	Long-eared Owl	Short-eared Owl
Tail: base to tip of longest feather	150	145
Tail: trailing edge of wing to tip	90	115
Wing width adjacent to body	170	165

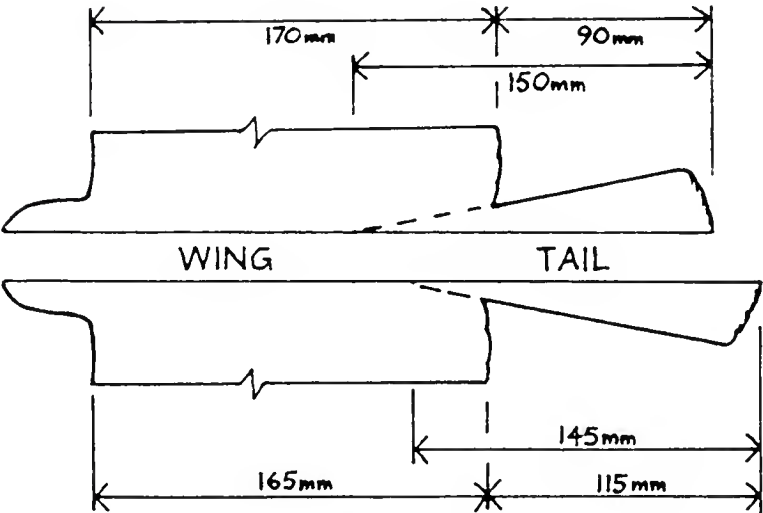


Fig. 1 Diagrammatic drawings of wing and tail measurements shown in table 1. Top, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*; bottom, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*

House Sparrows pursuing other species In connection with the recent note by S. Marchant on House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* chasing Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 37), may I draw attention to my note on House Sparrows pursuing other species (*Brit. Birds* 69: 274) in which I summarised 173 pursuit incidents which I observed during the period November 1967 to October 1974. Almost half (47%) of the incidents were during February-April; females seldom participated (1 female, 40 males); most victimised species were feral Rock Dove *Columba livia* (81) and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (80), with no other species over four. I concluded that 'The behaviour seems purposeless, but perhaps stems from aggressive nervousness at those times when the males' sexual/territorial instincts are at their most intense.'

K. G. SPENCER

18 St Matthew Street, Burnley, Lancashire

'BB'-Sunbird tour of Thailand, February 1982



This special trip was led by Iain Robertson and accompanied by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. In the 12 days in the field (4th-15th February), a total of 285 species was identified by the party. The highlights included a good selection of Palearctic species, together with many Oriental specialities (some of the best of which are also listed here):

Night *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Green Herons *Butorides striatus*, Cattle *Bubulcus ibis*. Little *Egretta garzetta*, Yellow-billed *E. intermedia* and Great White Egrets *E. alba*, Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus (aeruginosus) spilonotus*, Mountain Hawk *Spizaetus nipalensis* and Black Eagles *Ictinaetus malayensis*, Red-thighed Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*, Rufous-throated Tree Partridge *Arborophila rufogularis*, Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Lesser Sand *Charadrius mongolus*, Greater Sand *C. leschenaultii* and Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica*, Red-necked *Calidris ruficollis*, Temminck's *C. temminckii* and Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica* and Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus*, Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus*, Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*, Fork-tailed *Apus pacificus*, Little *A. affinis* and Dark-rumped Swifts *A. acuticaudus*, White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*, Little Green *Merops orientalis* and Blue-bearded Bee-eaters *Nyctornis athertoni*, Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*, Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Richard's *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and Olive-backed Pipits *A. hodgsoni*, White-headed Bulbul *Hypsipetes thomsoni*, Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Blue-fronted *Phoenicurus frontalis* and Daurian Redstarts *P. aureus*, Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata*, Grey Bushchat *S. ferrea*, Blue Rock *Monticola solitarius*, White's *Zoothera dauma*, Eye-browed *Turdus obscurus*, Dusky *T. naumanni*, Grey-sided *T. jeae* and Chestnut Thrushes *T. rubrocanus*, Fan-tailed *Cisticola juncidis*, Paddyfield *Acrocephalus agricola*, Great Reed *A. arundinaceus*, Black-browed Reed *A. bistrigiceps*, Thick-billed *A. aedon*, Blunt-winged *A. concinens*, Pallas's *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Yellow-browed *P. inornatus*, Radde's *P. schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*, Brown *Muscicapa latirostris*, Red-breasted *Ficedula parva* and Paradise Flycatchers *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*, Grey-headed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis gularis*, Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*, Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Hunting Greenpie *Cissa chinensis*, Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and Crested Bunting *Melophus lathamii*.

The excellent weather, interesting country, charming Thai people and good food all added to the pleasure of this excellent birding trip. We hope to be able to make arrangements for further special *BB* holidays of this sort in the future.



75. *British Birds* subscribers on Doi Pui in Chiang Mai province, during *BB*-Sunbird trip to Thailand, February 1982, left to right: Iain Robertson, Ann Bythway, JTRS, and Mick Moore
(I. S. Robertson)

Announcements

International Conference on Bird Census and Atlas Studies The International Bird Census Committee and the European Ornithological Atlas Committee have announced the forthcoming joint 8th International Conference on Bird Census Work and the 6th Meeting of the European Ornithological Atlas Committee, to be held at Newland Park College, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, during 5th-9th September 1983.

Papers are invited on the following subjects: (1) Validation and testing of census methods; (2) Application of census techniques to bird community

It is intended that the conference will include reviews of progress in bird census work in Europe and North America, with special reference to the International Symposium held at Asilomar, California, in 1980 on 'Estimating numbers of terrestrial birds'. Preliminary registration forms are available from R. J. Fuller, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

‘An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palaearctic’ We are very pleased to announce that we have arranged with William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd for this new book by Dr Colin Harrison to be available to *BB* readers post free through British BirdShop (see page v). It has 322 pages and it displays, by means of multi-coloured maps, not only the breeding, but also the winter and passage distributions of the 639 bird species of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, together with the breeding ranges of a further 167 related species from adjoining areas. Texts alongside the maps cover status, habitats, nest-sites, general directions of migration and other relevant topics. It is a mine of information for anyone interested in distributions or in vagrants (and potential vagrants!) to western Europe. It is most attractively produced (design and cartography are by Crispin Fisher) and, at £12.95, seems remarkable value at today’s prices.

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WABBLERS

TRIST WARBLER *Mniotilta arctica* (L.)
A genus of two species endemic to the western United States region, including western Alaska region (range limit). They are usually in wintered flocks and show evidence of a weak reproductive pattern with the Yukon or Yukon in North and historic Alaska. Numerous breeding spots of this species are known in the western United States. The Golden-crowned Warbler breeds in the Yukon, Alaska. It breeds in the Middle East and the British Columbia region in the east, in the top and the Indian north-west. The population in the Yukon, through the Yukon and the Middle East. There are two and three-hatched species. It is a large bird in a tree or bush.

Western Warbler *Myiobae aedon* (L.)
Myiobae, breeding in a western United States region, including western Alaska region. It breeds in the Yukon, Alaska. It breeds in the Middle East and the British Columbia region in the east, in the top and the Indian north-west. The population in the Yukon, through the Yukon and the Middle East. There are two and three-hatched species. It is a large bird in a tree or bush.

Yellow-bellied Warbler *Myiobae aedon* (L.)
Myiobae, breeding in a western United States region, including western Alaska region. It breeds in the Yukon, Alaska. It breeds in the Middle East and the British Columbia region in the east, in the top and the Indian north-west. The population in the Yukon, through the Yukon and the Middle East. There are two and three-hatched species. It is a large bird in a tree or bush.

Black-bellied Warbler *Myiobae aedon* (L.)
Myiobae, breeding in a western United States region, including western Alaska region. It breeds in the Yukon, Alaska. It breeds in the Middle East and the British Columbia region in the east, in the top and the Indian north-west. The population in the Yukon, through the Yukon and the Middle East. There are two and three-hatched species. It is a large bird in a tree or bush.

Western Warbler

Western Warbler

Western Warbler

Western Warbler

Legend:

- 1. *Lophophanes inornatus* (black)
- 2. *Lophophanes inornatus* (white)
- 3. *Lophophanes inornatus* (diagonal lines)
- 4. *Lophophanes inornatus* (cross-hatch)
- 5. *Lophophanes inornatus* (dots)
- 6. *Lophophanes inornatus* (horizontal lines)

Scale: 0 100 200 km

Figure 1: Distribution maps of six bird species in the Sahel.

1. *Lophophanes inornatus* (black)
 Map 1 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

2. *Lophophanes inornatus* (white)
 Map 2 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

3. *Lophophanes inornatus* (diagonal lines)
 Map 3 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

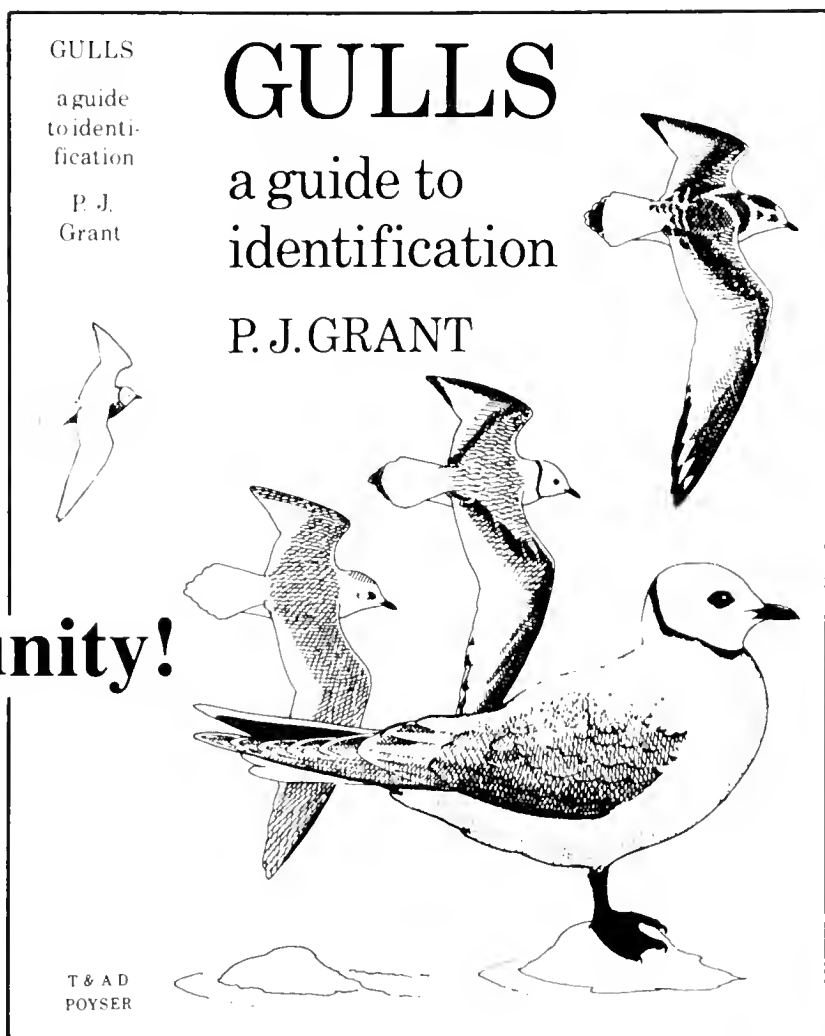
4. *Lophophanes inornatus* (cross-hatch)
 Map 4 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

5. *Lophophanes inornatus* (dots)
 Map 5 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

6. *Lophophanes inornatus* (horizontal lines)
 Map 6 shows the distribution of *Lophophanes inornatus* in the Sahel. The species is found in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel. The distribution is shown in the Sahel, primarily in the Sahel, and is distributed in the Sahel.

'Gulls: a guide to identification' The special pre-publication offer to *British Birds* readers will close with orders received on 4th June 1982. The price until then is £10.60 (post free in UK and Eire; add 50p for elsewhere in the world). The full publication price will be £12.00, but the book will be available only from bookshops and *not* through *British Birds'* British Bird Shop. Thus, this month is your last opportunity to obtain this book by P. J. Grant, based on his series of papers in *British Birds*, at the special reduced price, and to assist *British Birds'* finances at the same time. Please order now, using the form on page v.

**Last
opportunity!**



Requests

Chough survey in 1982 In April, May and June 1982, there is a joint IWC/BTO/RSPB census of the Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*. The last comprehensive survey was in 1963, which showed there to be no Choughs left in England, 11 pairs in Scotland, 20 pairs on the Isle of Man, 100 pairs in Wales and up to 700 pairs in Ireland.

Nobody knows how the bird has fared since then. Recent research suggests that the fate of the Chough is closely linked to changes in traditional farming methods in its coastal haunts. It is hoped that the present survey will show how the Chough population stands at present and record land-use patterns throughout its breeding range. To do this thoroughly, we require information on any past or recent breeding sites in order to prepare a list of areas to be covered. Volunteers are needed who are prepared to walk these coastal and mountain areas, to locate pairs and flocks this summer. If you can

provide any information on Chough breeding and feeding sites, or are keen to help, please contact: Chough Survey, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, or Chough Survey, IWC, Southview, Church Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

Monarch butterflies in 1981 Reports of sightings of monarchs *Danaus plexippus* in Britain and Ireland (other than in the Isles of Scilly), giving places, precise dates, and any special circumstances, for inclusion, with acknowledgment, in an account shortly to be published in *The Entomologist's Record* are requested by R. F. Bretherton CB, Folly Hill, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LE (tel. Guildford 893377).

News and comment

Bob Spencer and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

North Sea Bird Club We welcome the publication of the first report of the North Sea Bird Club, covering part of 1979 and all of 1980. It is a useful document, the more so because it is cautious. The introduction explains that the club was started as one means of providing a recreational outlet for offshore oilrig workers. 'Many of the observers', it admits, 'had never really watched birds before, and, to all, the middle of the North Sea presents a new environment, consequently we received many records, which, to say the least, are a little surprising.' Fair enough! There has been careful adjudication, and the records in print inspire a degree of confidence. For one thing, some of them are based on casualties sent to Aberdeen University, including Yellow-browed Warbler and Rustie Bunting. Additionally, there is the element of plausibility. For example, peak numbers of Blackcaps are recorded in September and October, with a trickle in November. All this fits in well with our present belief that the population of Blackcaps wintering in Britain is of Continental rather than British origin. In the heyday of the bird observatory movement in Britain, a regular pipe-dream was to be stationed somewhere in the middle of the North Sea. Now it's all happening, and this first report suggests that the results will be of real value to migration students. We wish the project well. Copies of the report, price £1, are obtainable from S. M. D. Alexander, Chevron Petroleum (UK) Ltd, Ninian House, Crawpeel Road, Altens, Aberdeen AB1 4LG.

Derek Goodwin For 30 years or more, the

name of Derek Goodwin has sprung to mind whenever an informed comment on bird behaviour was called for. A museum worker by profession, and an observant, thoughtful and vastly well-read field man in his spare time, Derek was a natural choice for the *BB* Notes Panel. On 26th February, Derek retired, and a small party assembled in the Bird Room at Tring to bid him farewell. Never one for public ceremonies, Derek bore it all with good grace, and there was no mistaking the respect and affectionate regard of his colleagues. We are sure that all our readers will join us in wishing Derek a long and fruitful retirement.

New Dungeness warden Congratulations to Sean McMin on his appointment as the new warden at Dungeness Bird Observatory. Previously, Sean had been assistant warden at Portland, and last year he spent a season as assistant warden at Long Point Bird Observatory in Canada. Bookings, or enquiries about staying at the observatory, should be sent to Sean at DBO, 11 RNSSS, Dungeness, Romney Marsh, Kent; telephone Lydd (0679) 21309.

BTO 'Birds in Winter' Conference The BTO's 'Birds in Winter' conference at Swanwick from 19th-21st February 1982 was a splendidly topical event. With the first full season's fieldwork for the BTO/IWC Winter Atlas project drawing to a close, many delegates were keen to learn of its progress. The message from Dr Peter Lack, Atlas organiser, was that coverage of Britain and Ireland in the previous three months had been even better than anticipated, and already the

study was yielding interesting data on hard-weather movements: good cheer for the many 10-km square buffs in the audience. With snowflakes still falling symbolically outside the lecture hall, all delegates were anxious to find out how birds in Britain had coped with blizzards during December and January. A vintage BBC 'Look' film showing the arctic conditions of the notorious 1962/63 winter put more recent weather in perspective. Lectures which followed presented diverse descriptions of the winter survival tactics used by birds, and advice on how human beings could help birds win the survival struggle. I'm sure no-one can have been disappointed by the feast of information presented over the weekend. Selected morsels include Bob Spencer's account of Skylark 'snow houses', David Norman's graphic descriptions of the Brambling invasion of Merseyside in January 1981, and Lennox Campbell's suggestion that wintering sea-ducks could be helped by the liberal discharge of untreated sewage into selected estuaries.

As usual at a Swanwick conference, there was plenty of interest outside the formal programme, including an exhibition/sale of bird paintings and David Wilson's excellent bookshop. The usual *BB* mystery photograph competition was held, this time run by Chris Harbard. There were only 21 entries (shame!), but four of these were correct: from Jim Clift, Dave King, Tim Parmenter and Robin Prytherch. The winner of the usual bottle of champagne was, after a draw, Robin Prytherch. (*Contributed by Kenny Taylor*)

Other conferences—and other thoughts

Is it our imagination, or are conferences tending to grow more specialised? The Seabird Group Conference, held at Denstone College during 12th-14th February had, by definition, a fairly narrow field, but what about a conference held at Oxford earlier last winter on 'The Goshawk'? Single-species conferences must be very infrequent. On the other hand, there is a growing tendency towards single-species study groups. For example, workers on Mute Swans, on Pied Flycatchers and on Redpolls all have their formal or semi-formal groups. Rather sadly, the formation of the Redpoll group coincided with a peak Redpoll population. Almost immediately afterwards, the Redpoll population collapsed, thereby frustrating would-be devotees.

As for the conferences, those present report that both were highly successful at all levels.

Could it be that the future lies with smaller, more specialised conferences, and that the days of the great three-ring International Ornithological Congresses (the next in Moscow this August) are numbered?

A changing face for Britain? The past 40 years have been marked by spectacular increases in afforestation, especially in Wales, northern England and in Scotland. These plantings may have brought ornithological gains—in increased numbers of Siskins, Crossbills and Hen Harriers, for example—but they have also reduced the potential living space for moorland breeders such as the Merlin. In a special forestry number of *Ecos*, the quarterly journal of the British Association of Nature Conservationists, a radically different possibility is suggested. John Bowers, lecturer in the School of Economic Studies at Leeds University, argues that the economic return from the afforestation of marginal land is low, while the damage to the environment is high. On the other hand, afforestation of parts of our main agricultural areas, replacing some of the grain production, would be economically attractive, especially if the subsidy element is taken into account. 'Taking some of this surplus arable out of production for a generation could yield positive social benefits. Growing grains we don't need to feed animals we don't need either, produces nothing except income for farmers. The alternative would at the very least give us something to burn.' Provocative stuff! Yet, if the moorland habitats are so fragile that they cannot be recreated once lost, and if the turnover time of a forest is the better part of a human life-span, isn't it right that we should consider all conceivable options before embarking on massive operations which, however worthy their objectives, do change the face of the countryside? And wouldn't it be nice to see the Buzzard come back to the farmlands of eastern England?

Misprint corner In the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society's annual report for 1980 David Noakes spotted the following record of 'a female Blackbird . . . moving confidently through huge crows assembled in Gallowtree Gate for the Royal visit on 14th March.' With so many huge crows about, there was presumably room for only a small crowd of spectators.

Charles Waterton Traveller and naturalist, Charles Waterton of Walton Hall near Wakefield was born on 3rd June 1782. Between 1812 and 1824, he made a series of

journeys into Guyana in South America, but spent the last 40 years at home, devoting his time to the study and preservation of wildlife. He turned his home into a nature reserve, probably the first in England, and an inspiration to other naturalists. To celebrate the bicentenary of his birth, Wakefield Art Gallery and Museums is mounting a major exhibition, the core of which will be Waterton's own collection of over 800 birds, animals and insects. The exhibition will be on show from 3rd June to 5th December 1982.

'Irish Birds' This journal (one issue annually at present) continues to increase in size. The latest one (volume 2, no. 1) runs to 144 pages, and is excellent value for its £2.50 (plus 35p postage) (from W. J. O'Flynn, Ballintubbrid, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, Ireland). As well as some short notes, the 28th 'Irish Bird Report' (covering 1980) and a ringing report for 1980, there are major papers on the seabirds of Great Saltee by C. S. Lloyd, on whether the Capercaillie was ever an Irish bird by J. J. Hall, on Whooper and Bewick's Swans in northwest Ireland by J. R. Sheppard, on the spring passage of Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas off the

south and west coasts of Britain and Ireland by D. L. Davenport, and a summary and assessment of results from Cape Clear Bird Observatory during the 1970s by C. D. Hutchinson. (*JTRS*)

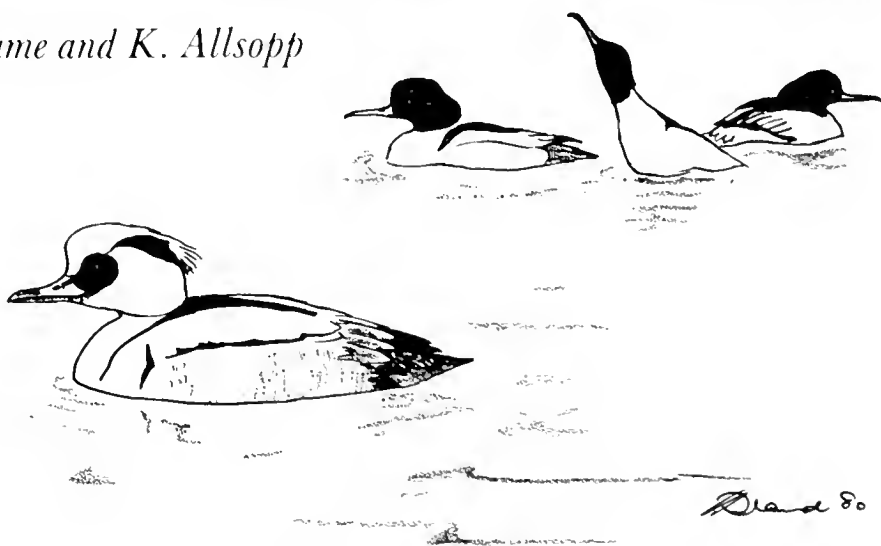
Gwent Breeding Bird Atlas Dr Stephanie Tyler has asked us to remind readers that fieldwork for this project continues until 1984 and that help (even casual records) from birdwatchers holidaying in the county would be much appreciated. Records should be sent to Dr S. J. Tyler, Yew Tree Cottage, Lone Lane, Penallt, near Monmouth, Gwent NP5 4AJ.

New recorder for Gwynedd F. A. Currie, Ty Clyd, Alyn Road, Fairbourne, Gwynedd LL38 2LZ, has taken over from Ivor McLean as recorder for Gwynedd (Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire). Ivor McLean remains as recorder for Gwynedd (Anglesey) (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 544).

New recorder for Leicestershire Rodney F. Baker, 3 Rosedale Road, The Meadows, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire LE8 1XT, has taken over from R. E. Cox as recorder for Leicestershire.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

After the severe weather of December and January, February was very dull, but largely frost-free. Until 14th, south to westerly winds brought mild air in from the Atlantic. From

15th, the high-pressure area over the Continent moved westward to cover Britain and Ireland, and the resulting easterly weather brought a drop in temperature; but, with

extensive cloud cover, severe overnight frosts were avoided. The high pressure declined after 24th, and the winds returned to the southwest.

The dates in this report refer to February unless otherwise stated, but many refer to January, adding to the picture for the period of exceptionally hard weather. February, with no unusual weather conditions, was a much quieter month for birds in general.

Seabird movements

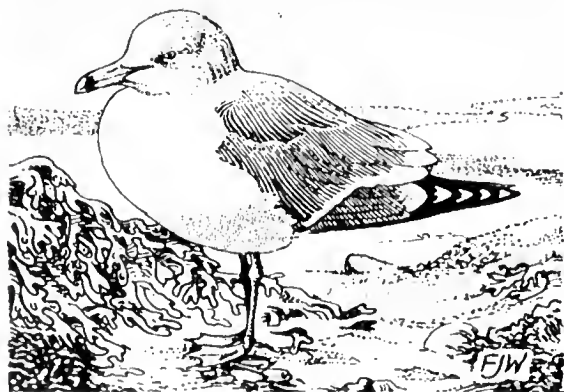
January in Kent was remarkable for the numbers of birds offshore in hard-weather conditions. **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* totalled 94 in Sandwich Bay on 2nd January, but Foreness Point recorded much bigger numbers in movements offshore, including 868 on 6th January and 1,046 on 27th January. **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* numbered 200 at Lade (also Kent) on 1st January, 218 at Reculver (Kent) on 24th January and 145 at Foreness Point on 28th of that month. **Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo* were also involved, with 336 going east at Reculver on 7th January and 211 at Foreness Point on 29th January. Sandwich Bay had a **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* on 7th, 8th and 27th; even stranger was a reported **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* at Foreness Point on 9th January, three days after a movement of 12,000 **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*. Other gull records include two **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* on the Hayle Estuary (Cornwall) all month and a scattering of **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus*. Most interesting of these was one on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 13th January, the first for the island. On the same date, one turned up inland, at Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire). Three were at Falmouth (Cornwall) all month and three were on the Mersey (Merseyside) on 20th. There were others in the southeast as usual, and a more northerly

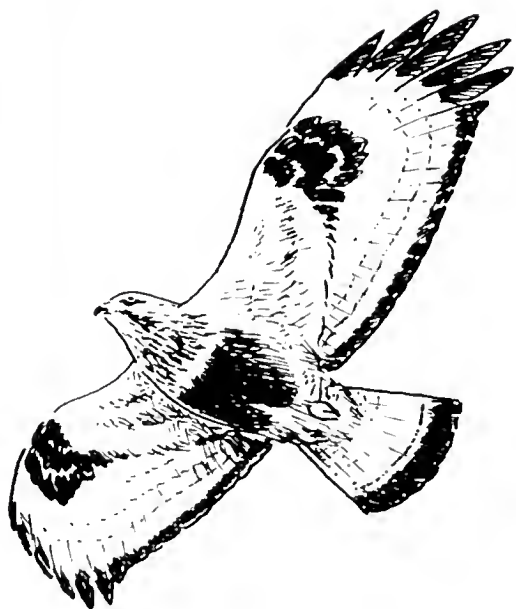


record from Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 26th. **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucooides* included three at Falmouth, one at New Brighton (Merseyside), two at Draycote Water (Warwickshire) and two at Cannock (Staffordshire) on odd dates into early March.

Waterside birds and wildfowl

A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was found at High Halden (Kent) on 12th and 13th January. Geese were more in evidence than usual in many areas, as already reported. **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* were noted frequently in Derbyshire, and 70 occurred in north Staffordshire, which was most unusual. There was regular commuting between the Ribble (Lancashire) and areas to the north, and the Ribble itself had an immense single flock of 13,750 on 3rd. **White-fronted Geese** *A. albifrons* included 2,800 on Sheppey (Kent) on 25th January and 32 of the Greenland race *flavirostris* on Shotwick Fields on the Dee Estuary (Clwyd) on 7th. **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* were unusually numerous in the southwest and on the Channel Islands, and also in Kent in January, with 18,500 at Elmley, 8,000 at St Mary's Bay and 6,000 at Egypt Bay. West Sedgemoor (Devon) and other western sites also recorded many thousands more than usual. **Pintails** *A. acuta* included a record Derbyshire count of 120 at Church Wilne on 24th January. **Smews** *Mergus albellus* remained widely scattered, many individuals remaining for unusually long periods, and 11 were as far west as Siblyback Reservoir (Cornwall) all month. A **Teal** *A. crecca* of the American race *carolinensis* remained on the Hayle and a **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* appeared at Dunwich (Suffolk) on 23rd January. In sharp contrast with recent winters, **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* have been remarkably scarce. One was carefully watched on the River Dee near Castle Douglas (Kirkcudbrightshire) on 16th January and the only other report was of one at Pebley Pond (Derbyshire) on 9th and 10th.





Birds of prey

The earlier **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Suffolk disappointed hundreds of would-be observers by its early departure—another, apparently of different age, was reported late in the month at Thorne Moor (South Yorkshire/Humberside). **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* made a strong showing in the regular places. There were up to 13 at Stodmarsh (Kent), nine at Sandwich Bay, 11 at Cliffe (also Kent), and eight on Sheppey all January, up to nine at Wicken Fen (Cambridgeshire) and four on Goonhilly Downs and six on Trewey Common (both Cornwall) in February. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* remained scarce, but one was at Blakeney (Norfolk) in mid month.

Passerines

Thrushes and finches moved into the south-west in huge numbers in the hard weather and remained in large flocks all month.

Redwings *Turdus iliacus* were in exceptional numbers on Guernsey, but nothing like so impressive as were **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris*: with virtually none a day or two before, suddenly there were some 250,000 on 10th January. Yet, in the middle of all this, 40 **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* wintered around Helston Sewage-farm (Cornwall), and at Caton (Lancashire) on 5th and 6th January a **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* was reported.

Thanks!

We should like to thank all the individuals and the editors of local society newsletters who send us details for this feature each month. We hope that this is regarded as acceptable by those who are not always acknowledged individually. We apologise to those who sent information which has not appeared, or appeared late, due to its not reaching us in time. Ideally, we need records *by 4th of the following month*—please keep them coming. We are also most grateful to the many artists and photographers who have supplied illustrations. Please note that line-drawings and black-and-white photographic prints should be sent direct to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK4 3NJ, to arrive before 8th of the month following the relevant record.

Latest news

Apart from **Chiffchaffs**, **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* and perhaps **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, summer visitors were generally late to arrive and still in small numbers even by mid April. Rarities were also few: Fair Isle had a first-year **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* on 12th, but the best bird was on Portland: a much-watched **Savannah Sparrow** *Ammodramus sandwichensis*.

Reviews

The Birds of Wiltshire. Edited by John Buxton. Wiltshire Library and Museum Service, Trowbridge, 1981. 194 pages; 32 black-and-white plates; 116 line-drawings; 100 distribution maps. £5.50.

I have to admit that reading this book was like a journey of exploration, so thin was my knowledge of Wiltshire or its birds. The 276 species which are on the county list are documented, including 125 which have bred.

One-third of this book deals with the important habitats of the county. One chapter describes the work of Wiltshire's early ornithologists: this makes interesting reading and one

discovers from their writings that Moorhens make better eating than Coots, and that the supreme meal was a Salisbury Great Bustard (later in the book the more enlightened attempts to reintroduce it onto Salisbury Plain are described). The 32 photographs indicate just what an attractive county Wiltshire is, and add support to the habitat chapters.

The species list has been split into two parts: first those which have bred at some time or other in the county, and secondly non-breeding species that have occurred up to 1979, with some important additions from 1980. I could not see any justification for this division, and one unexpectedly bumps into Raven and Red Kite in the breeding section, and Water Rail in the other. Without a species index, it is not easy to find quickly the reference one needs. The breeding maps have been placed away from the relevant species text, at the end of the book, and use the 10-km square as the scale, which was perhaps a mistake. For instance, the Grey Wagtail is shown as occurring in every square, yet, with only 150 pairs in the county, there can be on average only three pairs per square. Had the tetrad been adopted, the distribution pattern would have been more meaningful. Furthermore, there is no explanation to the maps and one is left to assume from comments in the species text that the one symbol used indicates presence only, and what period do the maps cover (presumably 1968-72)?

I was left feeling that I had learnt a great deal about the county. Whilst the Wiltshire Ornithological Society is to be applauded for producing this book for less than £6.00, one wonders if they have lost an opportunity to have been more expansive. B. NIGHTINGALE

The Birds of Kent: a review of their status and distribution. Edited by D. W. Taylor, D. L. Davenport and J. J. M. Flegg. The Kent Ornithological Society, Meopham, 1981. 438 pages; 1 colour plate; 44 black-and-white plates; some line-drawings. £13.95.

When one of the more significant birdwatching counties announces a review of its birds, one awaits the results with eager anticipation. I was not disappointed.

A survey between 1967 and 1973 yielded much information on the breeding species, and the results are shown using the same technique as the national survey, although here the area used is the tetrad. Collating the data was clearly a mammoth and ambitious task, but it is disappointing that 60 tetrads of the county were not surveyed at all during the seven years.

Chapters on the environment, supported by very relevant habitat photographs, lead logically into the systematic list. Each breeding species is covered by about a page of text, with the maps taking up another half page. Additional information is given for largest flocks, extreme dates for the summer migrants, and ringing recoveries. Non-breeding species are dealt with in a similar manner, with generally less space devoted to them, many with histograms illustrating peak times of occurrence.

As only an irregular visitor to the area, I would have liked to have seen a map indicating the locations mentioned in the text. That would have overcome the apparent need to show, on each species map, shaded areas for the towns, which tend to merge with the dots indicating breeding, thus making a confusing pattern for the eye (or did Ringed Plovers breed in Ashford?).

Those birdwatchers wanting their memories pleasantly jogged by reading about the 1978 Great Bustards and Pallid Swift will be disappointed. Records are included only up to 1976, with brief footnotes added for some 1977 occurrences. An appendix of rarities seen since 1976 would have been appropriate. I was interested to know if the Sparrowhawk, described here as a rare breeding species, had increased in Kent in the same way as in many other areas. Alas, too, the most recent comment refers to the situation in 1975.

Interesting comparisons are made with two earlier works on the birds of Kent, Ticehurst (1909) and Harrison (1953), and changes in status since those earlier days are commented on. This latest work will of course prove a very substantial platform for comparisons by future generations of birdwatchers. For today's generation, I would recommend this book to them, either as one to give hours of pleasant browsing or as a valuable source of reference for more serious delving. It is sad that neither R. C. Homes nor Dr J. G. Harrison, both of whom acted as chairman of the editorial group, lived to see the end result. This splendid product by the birdwatchers of Kent will, however, remain as a worthy memorial to them both.

B. NIGHTINGALE

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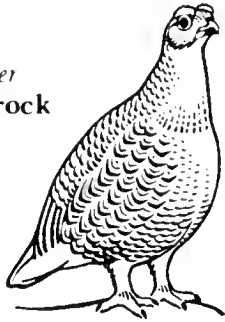
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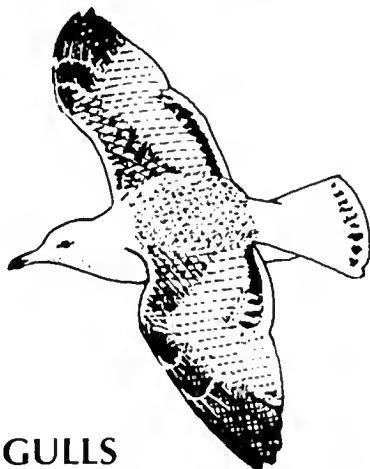
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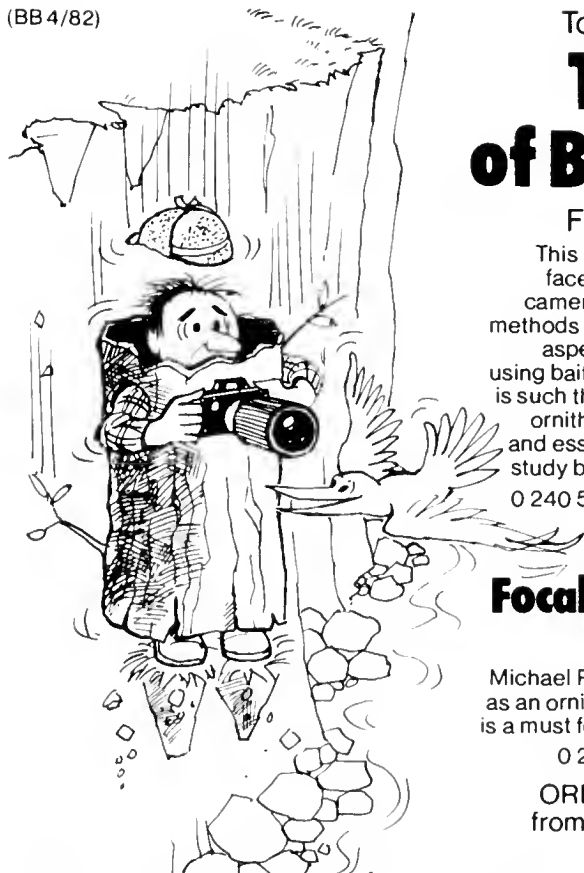
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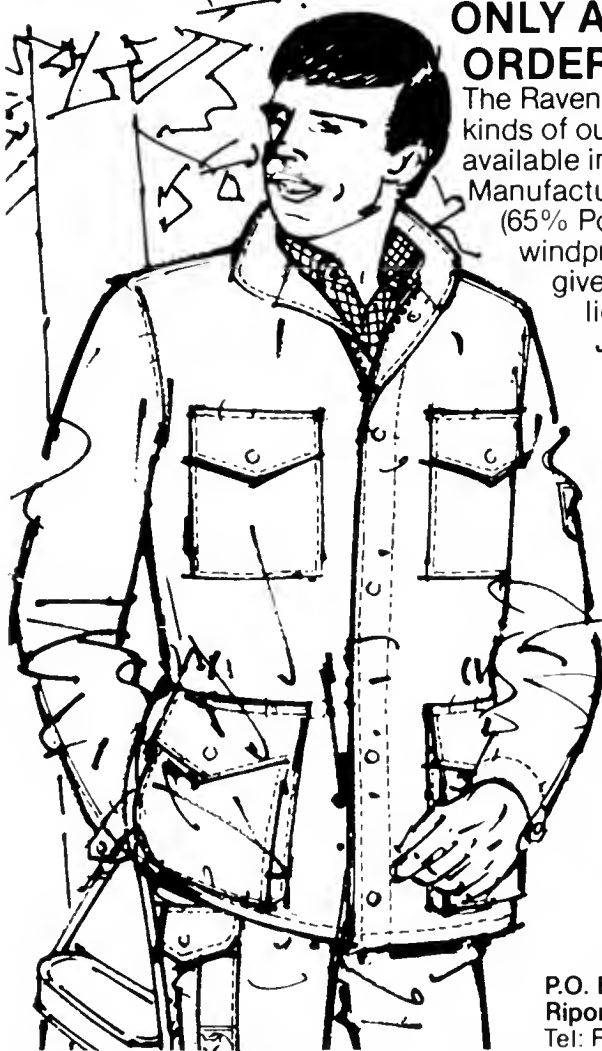
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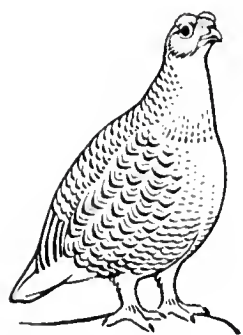
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VOLUME 75 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1982



Editorial

This is our 75th-birthday issue. Rather than devoting our limited space to self-congratulation, we feel that our readers will prefer the alternative method of celebration which we have chosen: a bumper issue with extra pages. The extra cost of this month's special silver cover has generously been given to us as a birthday present by our printers, Henry Burt & Son Ltd.

We also take the opportunity in this summer, when the XVIII International Ornithological Congress is being held in Moscow, to pay tribute to the work of our colleagues in the USSR by including a series of photographs of waders on their Siberian breeding grounds (pages 272-281).
EDS

Seventy-five years ago...

EDITORIAL

'Before setting forth our plans, our hopes, and our ambitions for *British Birds*, we must first express a deep sense of gratitude to all those who have so generously promised their support both in contributions to our pages and to our funds.

'It has been universally conceded that a Magazine devoted entirely to the study of the birds of this country was needed: a Magazine into which all that is of interest concerning British birds should be

gathered. It shall be one of our chief aims, but not by any means our only aim, to provide in these pages, month by month, a current history of British birds. Much will come, we trust, by first-hand contributions, but we shall also glean, from every published source available, whatever is likely to prove of permanent value. We beg our readers to help us in making this feature of the Magazine as complete as possible by sending notes of omissions which they may detect in this record, and copies of any communications appearing in the Transactions of local Natural History Societies, or in other publications to which we may not have access.

'When the Magazine is well started we hope, with the co-operation of our readers, to embark upon a series of more systematic investigations than have hitherto been attempted, with regard to matters concerning the birds of this country. Our plan is to make organised enquiries into such questions as the extension or diminishing of the breeding range of certain species, the exact status and distribution of some birds, the effects of protection in certain areas and on different species, the nature of the food of particular birds, and many kindred subjects.

'Could observations on such points be conducted on a common basis and made contemporaneously in different parts of the country, results of great interest and of very considerable scientific importance would be achieved.

'Of late years photography has come greatly to the fore as an adjunct to science, but ornithologists have been led away to a great extent by the charm of being able to take portraits from life of their favourites, and have used the camera more as a picture-maker than as a scientific recorder. We confess to a great liking for illustrations in a journal, but we are anxious that our illustrations shall in every case possess scientific merit, although they need not, for this reason, lack pictorial effect. There are many directions in which photography can be made of great service to ornithology; a photograph of the environment of a nest itself, and similarly, photographs of birds in attitudes such as flying, feeding, courting, hiding, nest-building, or otherwise engaged, are of more value than pictures of birds in repose. The importance of collecting photographic evidence of living nestling birds will be fully dealt with in a future issue of this Journal.

'Besides reviews and notices of books dealing with British birds, we intend to publish each month a list as complete as possible of all the books on the subject which have appeared during the month.

'Such, in bare and brief outline, is our plan, and we appeal to the readers of *British Birds* for the means of carrying it out. If the Magazine is to do good work it must have a goodly roll of subscribers, and the longer the roll the more work will it be possible to accomplish, in that funds will thereby be provided to enlarge the Magazine and to carry out those enquiries which will add to our knowledge of the life histories of the birds of the British Islands.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 1-3, June 1907)

The Goshawk in Britain



M. Marquiss and I. Newton

As a result of deforestation and persecution, the Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* was more or less exterminated in Britain by the late 19th century, with only sporadic breeding thereafter (Hollom 1957, Newton 1972). From the late 1960s, however, the situation improved, with breeding pairs becoming established in several areas to form the basis of the present population. This paper reviews the current status of the species in Britain and gives some information on origins, breeding, mortality and diet, in an attempt to assess the main factors influencing numbers and distribution.

Current status

Speculation on the numbers of Goshawks in Britain is rife. Optimistic estimates, based largely on hearsay and rumour, put the current breeding population as high as 145 pairs. The main idea giving rise to extravagant speculation is that Goshawks (traditionally thought of as secretive forest birds) must exist in large numbers to be seen even rarely. Thus, every sighting is held to be the tip of an iceberg, with as-yet-unreported populations living in the forest plantations that now clothe the hills in remote areas. This optimism has not been discouraged in previous publications on the status of Goshawks in Britain which have bemoaned the fact that many observers still withhold records (Brown 1976, Sharrock 1980). This paper should go some way to clarify the situation, since it incorporates much information previously unpublished. Moreover, the authors and their associates have systematically searched large areas of suitable woodland and have therefore been able to evaluate sight records as well as to say with some confidence that there are thousands of hectares of British forests unoccupied by Goshawks.

In some places, we have noted the presence of single birds which, despite vigorous display, apparently found no mate and did not breed. On two occasions, single birds built nests, and one of these laid and incubated eggs, though these proved, not unexpectedly, to be infertile. In other places where there were records of displaying pairs, we searched suitable habitat intensively, but produced no evidence of nests. In five such places, the woodland was so restricted that we could be certain that no nest was built. Thus, it seems that pairs have displayed regularly, sometimes in more than one year, in various places where they have not nested. This is not

unexpected, since non-breeding pairs are frequent among the larger raptors, particularly where food is in short supply or where territory holders include many individuals in immature plumage (Newton 1979).

It was usually obvious when Goshawks were using an area, since even non-breeders left plenty of signs (kills, droppings and moulted feathers) characteristic of the species. Where there were no such signs and nests only of Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* were found, we suspected that Sparrowhawks displaying above the canopy had been misidentified as Goshawks. An experienced observer is unlikely to confuse the species because they are so different in shape as well as in size. Inexperienced observers, however, may have been misled by the frequent statements in bird books that male Goshawks can be confused with female Sparrowhawks. Most Goshawks in Britain are of the large northern type (see later), so many females are larger even than Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, while all males are considerably larger than any Sparrowhawk, and three times as heavy.

In this paper, we are concerned mainly with breeding pairs or potential breeding pairs, so have ignored records of single birds and separated records of proven breeders from records of 'pairs seen'. The latter were likely to have overestimated the numbers of Goshawks present because they could have included some Sparrowhawks and the same individual Goshawk displaying over different places.

Another source of error in population estimates is the overlap between records from different observers, who seem to have operated unknown to one another. In one area, for example, we received records of the same nests from four different sources. We have therefore been conservative in our estimates, so as to ensure that the figures given represent the minimum

76. First-year Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* mantling dead rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. West Germany (Hansgeorg Arndt)



numbers of pairs. If we had erred in the opposite direction for those records which were possibly of different pairs in the same county, we could have added only six nesting places and eight pairs of displaying birds to the total.

Records fall naturally into 'areas', often straddling county boundaries. The size and shape of these areas (labelled by code letters A-V, table 1) varied according to the number of sites encompassed, but none was larger than 1,650 km². Within areas, most sites were less than 10 km apart (occasionally up to 40 km), and no two areas were closer than 80 km. Areas were widely distributed over mainland Britain, and only northwest Scotland provided no records. Although more than 90% of the recoveries of ringed Goshawks were within 40 km of their birthplace (see later), there may have been some interchange between adjacent areas. For the most part, however, the separate populations appeared to have arisen independently of one another.

Since 1965, Goshawk nests have been found in at least 60 different places in 14 areas, and pairs have been seen at a further 34 places, including eight additional areas where breeding has not been proved. Far fewer places, however, were occupied in any one year, and, of 56 different places (including all known 'alternatives' for each place) that were checked in 1979 and 1980, nests were found at only 39 (70%): a poor result for what should be an expanding population. Of the 22 areas, nine were represented over the years by only one known site and only three of these were used for nesting in 1979 and/or 1980. Of the remaining 13 areas, only six have had more than three pairs present in any one year, and only five had more than three pairs in 1979-80. Only in two areas (A and B) can it be said that the numbers have continued to increase over the years. Area D had at least five pairs breeding as long ago as 1973 and now has only two known pairs. Taken together, these various observations imply that the future for Goshawks breeding in Britain is far from secure.

It is unlikely that we have been informed of every nest found or pair displaying, so the figures we give are minimum values. In all but one of the areas where Goshawks have been proved to breed, however, their presence has been recorded independently by people with different interests. For example, records of birds killed have come from every area where more than one pair has been known to breed, mostly from people different from those who found the nests. We therefore find it hard to believe that there are *large*, as yet undiscovered, populations of Goshawks breeding in remote parts of Britain. All the evidence indicates the contrary: that as soon as Goshawks become established, they are all-too-obvious to birdwatchers as they display, and to foresters and gamekeepers if they nest and rear young.

Origins

Goshawks currently breeding in Britain are apparently not derived from Continental immigrants, but rather from birds which have escaped from falconers or been deliberately released. Both the geographical distribution and the timing of first breeding records are more consistent with the distribution of falconry activities and known releases than with natural colonisation (Kenward *et al.* in press). The Goshawks now breeding in

Table 1. Numbers of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* recorded in various areas in Britain during 1959-80

Area	Year pair 1st recorded	Year breeding 1st proven	NO. NESTING TERRITORIES		GREATEST NO. OCCUPIED IN ANY ONE YEAR		NO. OCCUPIED IN 1979-80		
			Breeding proven	Pairs seen	Breeding proven	Pairs seen	Year(s)	Breeding proven	Pairs seen
A	1965	1965	14	2	13	2	1979	13	2
B	1968	1968	7	4	7	2	1980	7	2
C	1971	1972	8	1	4	2	1977 & 1980	4	2
D	1965	1966	6	1	5	0	1973	2	0
E	1969	1970	2	3	1	2	1976	0	3
F	1975	1975	4	2	4	2	1979	4	2
G	1968	1970	4	5	4	1	1979 & 1980	4	1
H	1972	1972	5	0	2	0	{ 1973, 1977, } { 1979 & 1980 }	2	0
I	1978	—	0	3	0	3	1980	0	3
J	1975	—	0	3	0	3	1980	0	3
K	1975	1978	1	2	1	1	1978	0	0
L	1959	1959	4	2	1	1	1973 & 1977	1	0
M	1976	—	0	1	0	1	1976 & 1979	0	1
N	1971	1971	1	0	1	0	1971	0	0
O	1977	1978	1	0	1	0	1978 & 1979	1	0
P	1973	1977	1	0	1	0	1977	0	0
Q	1979	1979	2	0	1	0	1980	1	0
R	1977	—	0	1	0	1	1977-80	0	1
S	1974	—	0	1	0	1	1974-78	0	0
T	1977	—	0	1	0	1	1977	0	0
U	1975	—	0	1	0	1	1975	0	0
V	1976	—	0	1	0	1	1976	0	0
			60	34	39	20			

Britain became established at a time when those in the Netherlands and other nearby parts of Europe were much reduced from pesticide poisoning. As Goshawks had not colonised Britain in the previous 70 years, they would have been even less likely to do so then. Moreover, most established populations are in western, rather than eastern, districts of Britain, farthest from Continental sources.

Goshawks have been released at least in areas B, E, H, M, N, Q and T, and in three of these areas breeding records followed within two years of the releases. Falconers are known to have lost birds in areas C, D, F, L and T and at least nine different breeding females and one male have been able to carry leather anklets, jesses or bells in areas A, B (2), C (2), E, F, H (male) and L (2).

Kenward *et al.* (in press) have estimated that each year since 1970 about 20 imported Goshawks have successfully entered the wild, and in this decade a further 30-40 have been purposefully released in small groups. This is sufficient to explain the present population and the proliferation of breeding records in new areas through the 1970s. As Kenward points out, it is at first sight surprising that the current population is not larger, but this can be explained by persecution (see later), the sedentary nature of the species, and the sporadic nature of most escapes, which presumably leaves many birds without a breeding partner.

In addition, the majority of Goshawks breeding in Britain are larger than the Continental Goshawks which one would expect to colonise Britain naturally by immigration. To judge from the lengths of moulted feathers found at nests (Marquiss unpublished), most are approximately the size of those breeding in the north and east of Europe, from whence came most imported Goshawks in the early 1970s. Thus, there is nothing in present evidence which is inconsistent with the view that recent British Goshawks have been derived entirely from falconry sources.

Breeding

We have nest records of 177 breeding attempts from 1965 to 1980, chiefly after 1974. Most nests were in large blocks of mature woodland, but occasionally in woods as small as 3 ha or in trees only 12 m high. Of 66 nests where the tree species was recorded, 27% were in spruce *Picea*, 11% in Douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, 18% in larch *Larix*, 15% in pine *Pinus*, 6% in beech *Fagus sylvatica*, 9% in oak *Quercus* and 14% in sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. It seemed that nests were built in whatever species of tree was available; the openness of the tree stand appeared to be more important than the tree species, Goshawks tending to use more open woodland than Sparrowhawks nesting in the same area. Some of the places used by Goshawks had been used by Sparrowhawks in previous years, when the stand was denser. The height of nests above ground varied from 8 to 25 m, depending on the size and species of tree, nests usually being placed just below the canopy or in the lower parts of it. Breeding activity sometimes began as early as February with display and nest building, and nests were sometimes lined several weeks before egg laying. On some territories, more than one nest was built or refurbished in the same year, but pairs usually

Table 2. Laying dates, clutch-sizes, brood-sizes
Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* at vari

Altitude (m)	DATE OF 1ST EGG	CLUTCH-SIZE					
	Mean \pm SD in days (n) (range)	Frequencies					Mean \pm SD
		2	3	4	5	6	
301-400	11 Apr \pm 9.5 (11) (22 Mar to 23 Apr)	0	5	6	0	0	3.5 \pm 0.5
201-300	8 Apr \pm 12.2 (19) (23 Mar to 26 Apr)	1	5	12	0	0	3.6 \pm 0.6
101-200	5 Apr \pm 10.1 (8) (27 Mar to 26 Apr)	1	2	6	2	0	3.8 \pm 0.9
1-100	26 Mar \pm 9.1 (9) (12 Mar to 8 Apr)	1	0	4	3	1	4.3 \pm 1.1
1-400	6 Apr \pm 11.8 (47) (12 Mar to 26 Apr)	3	12	28	5	1	3.8 \pm 0.8

concentrated their efforts in one particular part of a nesting wood and usually lined only the nest in which they eventually laid. At least eight breeding attempts involved individuals in first-year plumage (three males and seven females, including both members of two pairs), all in places where food was abundant.

Only 73 breeding attempts, drawn from 26 different nesting places, provided sufficient data to allow estimates of breeding performance in situations free from direct human influence. The date of first eggs varied from 12th March to 26th April, with most clutches started in the first week of April. The majority were of three or four eggs and most broods contained three young (table 2). From 47 fully incubated clutches which hatched at least one chick, 16 eggs failed to hatch: in most cases, a single addled egg from a clutch of four. The remaining discrepancy between clutch- and brood-sizes was due to the death of one or two young during hatch or in their first week. On only one occasion was an older chick known to die—at about three weeks of age. There were frequent instances of whole nest contents deserted, perishing or disappearing, but many were attributable to human interference, and are considered later.

In general, breeding performance was related to altitude (table 2), largely demonstrated by correlations between the altitude and mean laying date at particular nesting places ($r=0.47$, $df=17$, $P<0.05$) and between the mean laying date and mean clutch-size ($r=0.61$, $df=15$, $P<0.01$). The frequency of addled eggs was greater at higher altitudes ($r_s=1$, $P=0.05$) and this, combined with the deaths of small young, led to a significantly smaller brood-size for places above 300m ($t=2.6$, $df=16$, $P<0.02$).

Despite the large number of nests which failed completely, there were only three proven replacement clutches. In these, the first clutches were lost in the first two weeks of incubation, but early failure did not necessarily lead to replacement, as an additional seven clutches lost in early incubation were not replaced. On the other hand, all three repeats followed first clutches that had been laid earlier than average (in the last week of March). At least two of the replacement clutches were small (three eggs and one egg) and the resulting broods were also small (two of two young and a single).

Frequency of addled eggs in breeding attempts by brood-size in Britain during 1959-80

BROOD-SIZE					No. addled eggs per fully incubated clutch (no. clutches)
Frequencies				Mean \pm SD	
1	2	3	4		
0	4	2	1	2.6 \pm 0.8	0.60 (5)
0	4	8	3	2.9 \pm 0.7	0.37 (19)
0	1	5	4	3.3 \pm 0.7	0.30 (10)
1	4	7	6	3.0 \pm 0.9	0.23 (13)
1	13	22	14	3.0 \pm 0.8	0.34 (47)

Nest failures

Of the 177 recorded breeding attempts, only 101 (57%) produced fledged young. Some of the failures resulted from direct human interference, mainly by egg-collectors, gamekeepers and hawk keepers or their agents. Several carcasses of shot or poisoned adults were found. Gamekeepers, by their own admission, were also responsible for the failure of some breeding attempts by removing nest contents or disturbing the breeding site until the nest contents perished. Clutches of Goshawk eggs collected in Britain have been seen in private collections and in one case the collector admitted the eggs were from a particular site. Similarly, some hawk keepers have admitted that their birds came from British nests and have named five specific sites.

To assess the effects of wilful human interference on production, we investigated the frequency and causes of total nest failure in six areas where there was proof of robbing or persecution, separately from five other areas where, in the absence of contrary evidence, we assumed that all failures were due to natural causes or to unintentional disturbance, such as tree-felling. Of 66 attempts in the latter areas, 55 (83.3%) produced fledged young; five (7.6%) nests were deserted, one clutch failed to hatch after full incubation, and in another nest the contents disappeared around hatching time (table 3). Two nests collapsed, one destroying a partly completed clutch and the other a brood of young about two weeks old, and tree-thinning operations led to desertion of one clutch and the death of a newly hatched brood.

In contrast, in areas where nest robbing and persecution occurred, only 46 (41.4%) of 111 breeding attempts were successful. Fourteen (12.6%) attempts were proved to have failed due to persecution and 35 (31.5%) others failed in circumstances suggesting robbing or persecution. The failures of the seven nests where eggs or small young disappeared were probably also due to persecution, because five of these were at sites where wilful disturbance had occurred in previous years. Other failures were on average slightly less frequent than in the areas free of persecution, probably because many failures due to persecution or robbing occurred early in the breeding cycle, leaving fewer to fail subsequently from other factors. It is

Table 3. Frequency and circumstances of nest failures of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* during 1959-80 in areas of Britain where persecution or robbing of nesting pairs was proved (P), compared with failures in other areas where causes of nest failure were assumed to be free of wilful human interference (NP)

	P (28 sites) No. %		NP (22 sites) No. %	
No. recorded breeding attempts	111		66	
No. (%) producing fledged young	46	41.4	55	83.3
Failures proved due to wilful human interference:				
Adults killed	10	9.0	0	
Disturbance leading to death of nest contents	4	3.6	0	
Failures thought due to human interference because of circumstantial evidence:				
Tree climbed, eggs disappeared	15	13.5	0	
Tree climbed, young disappeared	13	11.7	0	
Disturbance followed by death of nest contents	7	6.3	0	
Other failures:				
Nest deserted	6	5.4	5	7.6
Eggs or small young disappeared	7	6.3	1	1.5
Eggs failed to hatch	0		1	(1.5)
All young died at hatch	1	0.9	0	
Nest collapsed	1	0.9	2	3.0
Timber operations leading to death of nest contents	1	0.9	2	3.0

therefore not unreasonable to assume that the success rate in these areas would have been about 83%, and that robbing and persecution reduced this by about half, to 41%. Taking into consideration repeat layings, deliberate human interference resulted in a loss of an estimated 135 fledged young from 1965 to 1980 in those areas where nests have been monitored. Because gamekeepers were known to have climbed to some nests and removed their contents, it was impossible to estimate the proportion of failures due to egg-collectors or hawk keepers, but, if some well-known nests had not failed early due to one type of person, they would almost certainly have been robbed later by another.

Ringling recoveries and mortality of full-grown Goshawks

From 1975 to 1980, at least 101 nestling Goshawks were ringed in Britain, and at least 14 were recovered, all but one within 40km of the birthplace. Two were trapped and released and another, which had hit a fence, was rehabilitated and also released. Of the other 11 recoveries, two were reported as road casualties, eight had been shot, trapped or poisoned, and the cause of death of the remaining one was unknown. The proportion recovered varied from area to area. In one where there were few gamekeepers, 25 Goshawks have been ringed and none recovered. In another area which had many private estates with gamekeepers, nine of the 37 Goshawks ringed have been recovered. In this area, it seems that, in recent years, gamekeepers have stopped reporting rings. One gamekeeper reported the ring on only the first Goshawk which he killed, though he later killed four others, at least three of which were also ringed. Furthermore, in 1980, two more ringed Goshawks were killed and reported to us, but neither was reported to the ringling office. This explains the reduction in recoveries

in this area from six out of 13 ringed during 1976-77 to three out of 24 ringed during 1978-80. It also shows the high proportion of local young from successful nests which were removed in this way after becoming independent.

The evidence that many full-grown hawks have been killed in Britain (mainly by gamekeepers) is considerable when one takes into account (i) carcasses found at breeding sites, handed into museums and private taxidermists or sent for post-mortem or chemical analysis; (ii) deaths reported to local recorders, or the ringing office; and (iii) the admissions of gamekeepers themselves, who on occasions also produced some Goshawk remains or a ring in support of their claims (table 4).

Of the 49 full-grown Goshawks recorded as killed by man since 1971, 13 were breeding adults at nesting sites (11 shot, one poisoned and one pole-trapped). Of those killed away from nests, at least four were falconers' birds, but most of the remaining 32 were thought to have been wild, as they were near breeding areas. At least eight were shot or pole-trapped at Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* release pens, four of them within two months of fledging.

Table 4. Recorded deaths of full-grown Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in Britain during 1959-80

	Cause of death		Killed (method not specified)	Trapped	Shot	Poisoned
	unknown	Collision				
Deaths reported to local recorders or to ringing office	2	2	3	1	8	0
Carcasses found, sent for post-mortem or analysis, to museums or to private taxidermists	0	2	0	2	15	4
Reports from gamekeepers, mostly substantiated	0	0	9	5	2	0
TOTALS	2	4	12	8	25	4

Food

In Britain, as elsewhere (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1971, Opdam *et al.* 1977), breeding Goshawks took a wide variety of prey, as large as the brown hare *Lepus capensis* or as agile as the Sparrowhawk, the proportion of different species in the diet being largely determined by their availability. Thus, in any one area, the major part of the diet consisted of the most abundant species of medium-sized mammals, particularly squirrels *Sciurus*, rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and hares, and large birds, particularly Wood-pigeons *Columba palumbus*, feral Rock Doves *C. livia*, grouse (Tetraonidae) and partridges *Alectoris/Perdix* (appendix 1).

From 30 different nesting sites, 848 prey items were recorded between March and August in the years 1974-80. There were insufficient records from particular sites to detect any variations between years in prey whose numbers fluctuate greatly, such as mountain hare *Lepus timidus* or Red



77. First-year female Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* at prey, USSR, October 1980 (*M. Omelko*)
Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*. For four sites, there were enough records from all parts of the breeding season to show a significant variation between months in the composition of prey brought to the nest ($\chi^2=34.4$, $df=9$, $P<0.001$). This was largely due to peaks in the numbers of game-birds taken in spring (March to May) and in August (table 5). Rabbits were taken from spring through to July, and hares mainly in June. Doves and pigeons occurred throughout the season, forming a slightly lower proportion in July and August when the diet became more diverse, including appreciable numbers of other large birds (particularly crows), and small numbers of other passerines.

Table 5. Variation between months in number of prey items brought to four nests of Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* in Britain
All nests were 190-240 m above sea level

Prey	March/ April		May		June		July		August	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	4	25.0	9	21.4	39	24.2	34	28.1	14	14.9
Hare <i>Lepus</i>	0	—	0	—	31	19.3	9	7.4	7	7.4
Red squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	0	—	2	4.8	4	2.5	7	5.8	0	—
Game-birds (Galliformes)	6	37.5	16	38.1	30	18.6	33	27.3	33	35.1
Pigeons <i>Columba</i>	5	31.3	13	31.0	47	29.2	23	19.0	19	20.2
13 other species	1	6.3	2	4.9	10	6.2	15	12.4	21	22.3
Total items	16		42		161		121		94	

These prey figures were perhaps unrepresentative for Britain as a whole, because many records came from upland areas, where the diet was dominated by moorland species. It is likely that Goshawks in lowland areas have a distinctly different diet (e.g. Kenward 1979 showed that Goshawks temporarily released in Oxfordshire in winter 1974/75 preyed mainly on Woodpigeons, rabbits and Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*). We therefore segregated food data by altitude (appendix I) and some general trends emerged (table 6). At low-ground sites, more-diverse prey were recorded, with more species forming a substantial (>5%) part of the diet ($r=0.70$, $df=10$, $P<0.02$), whereas, on higher ground, a single major prey species contributed a greater proportion of the total food ($r_s=0.61$, $N=12$, $P<0.05$). On low ground, the principal prey species for individual sites were red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, Woodpigeon or rabbit, but above 250m Red Grouse usually outnumbered all other prey. Although Goshawks nested in woodland, open-country prey—such as hares, grouse or partridges—were between 16% and 90% of the diet, this proportion increasing with altitude ($r=0.69$, $df=10$, $P<0.02$). Conversely, strictly woodland species, such as squirrels, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, were taken more frequently at low-ground sites ($r=0.70$, $df=10$, $P<0.02$).

Table 6. Variation with altitude in composition of prey brought to nests of British Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*

	ALTITUDE (M)			
	100	100-200	200-300	300-400
Number of different nest sites studied	4	8	10	8
Total number of items recorded	116	210	374	148
Total number of species recorded	25	32	32	13
Number of species comprising more than 1% of items	16	12	11	9
Proportion (%) of items comprising predominant species	22.4	27.1	27.8	54.1
Proportion (%) of all items that were woodland species	22.4	15.7	7.8	5.4
Proportion (%) of all items that were open-country species	30.2	38.6	45.2	74.3

The relationships between prey-composition and altitude again reflected variation in prey availability. At lower elevations, land-use was more varied and habitats were more productive, giving a greater variety of abundant prey species. At high altitudes, moorland was one of the few habitats providing reasonably abundant prey of the right size, namely Red Grouse and mountain hares. Thus, above 300m, although Goshawks used woodland for nesting, they were dependent on adjacent open country for most of their food.

Organochlorine levels in unhatched eggs

Persistent pesticides have been implicated in the declines of some raptor populations, partly through causing eggshell thinning and reduced breeding success (Ratcliffe 1970, Newton 1979). Twelve unhatched Goshawk eggs from Britain (representing nine clutches from six areas during



78. Adult Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* at nest with three young, Czechoslovakia, 1977 (Josef Hlávěk)

1974-79) were analysed for organochlorine compounds. Compared with the eggs of some other birds of prey (Newton & Bogan 1974, Peakall 1976, Newton *et al.* 1978), these Goshawk eggs contained low organochlorine levels and the shells showed little or no thinning. The mean shell index of the five clutches represented was 2.16, which was only 3% less than the pre-DDT mean of 2.22 (based on 79 northwest European eggs examined by Anderson & Hickey 1974) (table 7). These findings were not unexpected because, in their breeding, Goshawks in Britain showed none of the other



79. Adult Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* leaving nest with three young, Czechoslovakia, 1977 (Josef Hlásek)

symptoms (e.g. egg-breakage and high embryo-mortality) associated with substantial organochlorine contamination. It thus seems unlikely that persistent organochlorines have had a significant effect upon Goshawks in Britain in the years concerned.

Discussion

The Goshawk is still one of the scarcest raptors breeding in Britain, being closer in abundance to the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and Red Kite *Milvus*

Table 7. Organochlorine levels and eggshell indices of undeveloped eggs from nests of British Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* during 1974-79

DDE is the main terminal metabolite of DDT; PCBs are from industrial polychlorinated biphenyls; HEOD is from aldrin and dieldrin. Levels are given as ppm in lipid. Shell indices are calculated using Ratcliffe's method (Ratcliffe 1970). * = trace

Year	Nest	Shell index	DDE	PCBs	HEOD
1974	1	—	4	4	4
1975	2	2.45	3	2	1
1975	3	2.30	6	18	1
1975		2.32	5	17	1
1975		2.34	6	20	2
1976	4	2.02	6	8	21
1976		1.98	7	14	17
1977	5	2.00	12	44	2
1977	6	2.03	10	20	1
1977	7	—	7	32	4
1979	8	—	*	20	2
1979	9	—	1	12	1



80. First-year female Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* at nest, Denmark (Arthur Gilpin)

milvus than to the Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, which is the next most numerous species. Goshawks do not have stringent habitat requirements. They take a variety of prey, are able to hunt both in open country and in woodland, and nest in quite small woods, as well as large forests. Thus, the only parts of Britain unlikely to support breeding Goshawks are extensive tracts of open country devoid of woodland, and extensive planted hill forests which are devoid of suitable prey, unless they are adjacent to open country. Clearly, many more parts of Britain are suitable for Goshawks than are occupied at present.

The current breeding stock in localised pockets has arisen as a result of escapes or releases of captive birds and, because Goshawks are essentially sedentary, they are unlikely to colonise the rest of Britain rapidly. New areas may develop only by the slow expansion from existing centres, by further escapes or releases, or by deliberate translocations. Releases occur less frequently now than formerly (Kenward *et al.* in press) because, with licensing restrictions and quarantine requirements, it is more difficult and expensive to import Goshawks. The feral populations now established are, however, potentially highly productive. With about 80% of nesting attempts producing on average three young each, the production could be 2.4 young per attempt. Moreover, in a colonising species, one would expect first-year mortality to be less than usual because young birds do not have to disperse far to settle in places free of competition from older birds. It is difficult to estimate mortality because, in Britain, as in other areas (e.g. Scandinavia: Haukioja & Haukioja 1970), the biases introduced by persecution overemphasise the mortality of birds in their first year or two of

life. This point is largely academic, however, because the British Goshawk population is still so small and localised that human interference—which has lowered production by half in some areas and caused the death of at least 49 individuals (13 of which were known to be breeding)—must inevitably have greatly curtailed numbers and distribution. Of the seven areas in Britain where two or more nests were found in any one year, robbing and persecution at the breeding site has occurred at five, and was worst at those designated A and D. The killing of Goshawks away from nests has occurred in all seven areas, but was worst in D and C. The populations of Goshawks at A and C are currently stable and probably increasing, albeit slowly. At D, where most of the known nests have been robbed and full-grown Goshawks frequently killed, known nests have declined from at least five in 1973 to two in 1980. So, once Goshawks had begun to breed in an area, the subsequent population trend depended primarily on the extent of persecution.

Although our records of pairs or nests came from 22 areas, nine of these were represented by only one known site, and only three of these nine were occupied during 1979-80. Records of one pair do not therefore offer much hope for the establishment of viable populations, and only the five areas where more than three pairs were found during 1979-80 can be considered as likely centres from which the British population may expand.

In view of the amount of persecution already suffered by British Goshawks from gamekeepers, it is pertinent to comment on the extent of Goshawk predation on game-birds. At lower altitudes, game-birds (mainly partridges) formed 22% of the prey brought to nests. Above 300m this rose to 54%, made up exclusively of Red Grouse. Without some measure of the size of the grouse population, however, we could not say whether Goshawk predation reduced the numbers of grouse available for shooting. The figure of 54% grouse in the diet was derived mainly from nests in areas and in years when grouse numbers were very high. As grouse numbers declined,

81. Female Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* at nest with young, Sweden, June 1962 (*Gunnar Lind*)



one Goshawk pair failed to lay and another deserted during incubation, but two other pairs turned to rabbits, hares and Woodpigeons in these years, and bred as usual. For all four pairs, it was clear that predation on grouse decreased markedly when there were fewer available, so the figure of 54% did not always apply.

Nowhere did we find Pheasants taken in numbers, but the fact that several Goshawks were killed at Pheasant release sites in autumn suggests that predation on Pheasants may increase at that season. In lowland Britain, alternative prey is abundant, so predation on Pheasants is unlikely to reach the levels it has in central Sweden (Kenward 1978), though of course there may always be local problems at Pheasant release pens. Viewed on a national scale, however, Goshawks are still too rare to be making serious inroads on game populations.

Acknowledgments

Only about one-fifth of the data for this paper was collected by ourselves. Much of the remainder was provided by five amateur ornithologists who have not only recorded nest details, but repeatedly searched large areas of forest, often only to record the absence of Goshawks. All five wished to remain anonymous, convinced that the best interest of the birds is served by secrecy. We also acknowledge 53 other informants whose individual contributions were smaller, but in total no less significant. These people include local recorders (11), foresters (7), gamekeepers (5), falconers (4), reserve wardens (5), land-owners (2), museum staff (2), private taxidermists (2), and 16 others whose interest in the species is part of their general interest in birds. We wish to thank the RSPB for their full co-operation, in particular the species protection officers who kindly made available some data on persecution, and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel for asking observers to send information to us. Finally we are grateful to Dr J. Bogan who analysed the eggs for organochlorine content and Dr R. E. Kenward who criticised the paper in draft.

Summary

1. Since 1965, pairs or nests of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* were known to us in 22 widespread areas of Britain. During 1979-80, only five of these areas held more than three known nests or pairs. The total nesting places known was 60, but only 39 (70% of those examined) were recorded as occupied during 1979-80.
2. The present population of Goshawks breeding in Britain is thought to have originated entirely from released birds or falconers' escapes, rather than from immigration.
3. In areas where persecution from people seemed lacking, 83% of nests produced young, whereas, in areas where wilful human interference was proved, only 41% of nests produced young.
4. In two areas, the killing of full-grown Goshawks (mainly by gamekeepers) was frequent, and, in the area where this was accompanied by nest robbing, the population has declined since it was discovered. Of 55 deaths of full-grown Goshawks known to us, at least 49 (89%) were of birds shot, poisoned, trapped, or killed by man in an unspecified manner.
5. Most clutches consisted of three or four eggs and most successful broods consisted of three young.
6. In lowland, Goshawks took a great variety of prey, especially pigeons *Columba*, squirrels *Sciurus* and rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, and no one species was of overriding importance. In upland, they fed mainly on a smaller variety of open-country prey, especially Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* and hares *Lepus*.
7. The levels of persistent organochlorines in unhatched eggs were low and seem unlikely to have had any significant effect on Goshawks in Britain.
8. Although Goshawks are still among the scarcest of British raptors, they do not have stringent habitat requirements. The main factor currently limiting their population expansion appears to be persecution. At this stage, the species could still be wiped out again in this country.



82. First-winter female Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Sweden, February 1981 (Bjørn Huseby)

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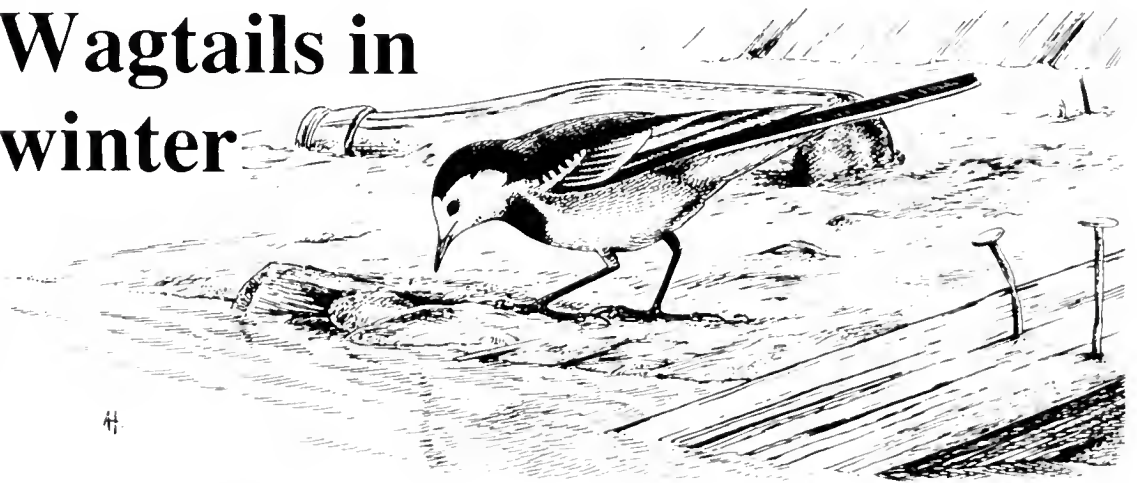
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Appendix 1. Number of prey items of Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* recorded at British nest sites at different altitudes during March-August 1974-80

Number of nest sites: 4 at <100m, 8 at 100-200m, 10 at 200-300m and 8 at 300-400m

Prey	ALTITUDE (M)							
	<100		100-200		200-300		300-400	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	12	10.3	16	7.6	59	15.8	1	0.7
Mountain hare <i>Lepus timidus</i>	—		18	8.6	33	8.8	4	2.7
Brown hare <i>L. capensis</i>	—		2	1.0	—		—	
Red squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	20	17.2	13	6.2	6	1.6	—	
Grey squirrel <i>S. carolinensis</i>	—		2	1.0	1	0.3	—	
Water vole <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Mouse/vole (Rodentia)	—		2	1.0	1	0.3	—	
Stoat <i>Mustela erminea</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Weasel <i>M. nivalis</i>	1	0.9	—		—		—	
Common Frog <i>Rana temporaria</i>	—		—		1	0.3	—	
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2	1.7	1	0.5	1	0.3	—	
Teal <i>A. crecca</i>	4	3.4	—		—		—	
Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	2	1.7	—		2	0.5	—	
Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	—		—		1	0.3	2	1.4
Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	—		38	18.1	104	27.8	80	54.1
Black Grouse <i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	—		3	1.4	3	0.8	—	
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	11	9.5	2	1.0	—		—	
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	11	9.5	7	3.3	3	0.8	—	
Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	3	2.6	6	2.9	9	2.4	—	
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	2	1.7	1	0.5	—		—	
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	—		1	0.5	1	0.3	—	
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	—		—		2	0.5	—	
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	—		2	1.0	3	0.8	—	
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	—		2	1.0	1	0.3	—	
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	—		1	0.5	2	0.5	—	
Black-headed Gull <i>L. ridibundus</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	3	2.6	—		—		1	0.7
Feral Rock Dove <i>C. livia</i>	1	0.9	4	1.9	6	1.6	22	14.9
Woodpigeon <i>C. palumbus</i>	26	22.4	57	27.1	81	21.7	21	14.2
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	1	0.9	—		—		—	
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	—		—		—		4	2.7
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>	—		—		1	0.3	—	
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	—		—		—		1	0.7
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	—		1	0.5	—		—	
Rook/crow <i>Corvus</i>	3	2.6	2	1.0	8	2.1	—	
Jackdaw <i>C. monedula</i>	2	1.7	—		1	0.3	—	
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	1	0.9	—		3	0.8	2	1.4
Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	2	1.7	8	3.8	10	2.7	7	4.7
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1	0.9	8	3.8	15	4.0	1	0.7
Song Thrush <i>T. philomelos</i>	1	0.9	3	1.4	3	0.8	—	
Redwing <i>T. iliacus</i>	1	0.9	—		—		—	
Blackbird <i>T. merula</i>	2	1.7	2	1.0	3	0.8	2	1.4
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	1	0.9	—		1	0.3	—	
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	2	1.7	2	1.0	7	1.9	—	
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	0.9	1	0.5	1	0.3	—	
Sparrow <i>Passer</i>	—		—		1	0.3	—	
Total items	116		210		374		148	

Territorial behaviour of Pied Wagtails in winter



N. B. Davies

These studies, previously published in detail in specialist journals, are so fascinating that they deserve a wide audience, hence this invited summary paper prepared especially for 'British Birds'

For many small birds, winter is a critical time of the year. Days are short, food is scarce and many individuals starve to death. The main aim of my wagtail study was to discover how the behaviour they adopt in winter increases their feeding efficiency and hence chances of survival. My study site was Port Meadow on the outskirts of Oxford. Many of the Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba yarrellii* which winter in the Thames valley are visitors which breed farther north (Davis 1966, Broom *et al.* 1976).

Some fed in flocks on flooded pools, while others defended feeding territories along the River Thames which flowed along one side of the meadow (fig. 1). The flock birds wandered widely; for example, in one winter, I colour-ringed 150 and yet saw only six of these regularly on the meadow. Some were seen on the nearby rubbish tip and others in gardens adjoining the meadow. Many of those along the river, on the other hand, defended the same territory throughout the winter. The boundaries were rather stable and each wagtail occupied a stretch of about 300m of river, defending both banks against intruders. There seemed to be considerable competition for the territories: whenever an owner disappeared, its place was quickly taken by another. Most owners were males, as in Zahavi's (1971) study in Israel.

Winter time-budget

By sitting on the river bank, I was able to watch a territory owner continuously throughout the whole day without ever losing sight of it. In midwinter, with only 8½ hours of daylight, an owner spent 90% of the time feeding. From data on time-budgets, the daily energy expenditure was estimated to be 22.4 Kcal (table 1a). This estimate is undoubtedly crude, but it agrees well with other methods (Kendeigh *et al.* 1977; Davies 1981).

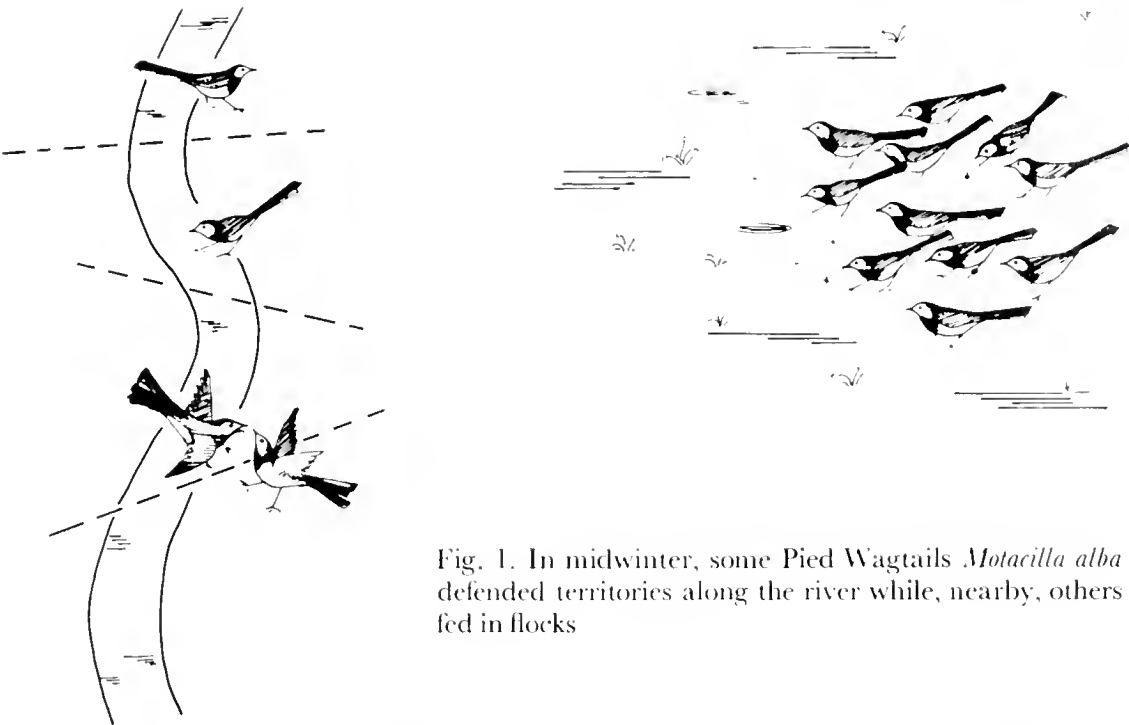


Fig. 1. In midwinter, some Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* defended territories along the river while, nearby, others fed in flocks

Since the wagtails picked up such small items, it was impossible to see exactly what they were eating, so I relied on the indirect method of analysing prey remains in their faeces. The main remains were the wings of small flies (especially chironomid midges), wing cases of small beetles and the mandibles and legs of spiders. I kept a wagtail in captivity and found that this kind of analysis gives a very good measure of prey eaten (Davies 1977). Prey items eaten in winter were, on average, worth 3.5 cal. The average feeding rate was 18 items per minute, and the daily energy intake was estimated to be 21.7 Kcal (table 1b), which approximately balances the energy expended.

The main conclusion from these very rough calculations is that, even with what seems to be a phenomenal feeding rate of one small insect every 3 or 4 seconds throughout the whole winter's day, a wagtail only just achieves energy balance. There seems little doubt that, like other small birds in winter (Gibb 1956, 1960), Pied Wagtails are hard pressed to find enough food, so we would expect any behaviour that improved their feeding efficiency to have strong selective advantage.

Table 1(a)
Estimates of midwinter daily energy expenditure by Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba*

Activity	Hours per day	Daily cost (cal.)
Foraging	7.65	10,710
Resting	0.53	371
Defence	0.32	448
Sleeping	15.50	10,850
Total		22,379

Table 1(b)
Calculation of midwinter daily energy intake by Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba*

$$\begin{aligned} &18 \text{ prey/min} \times 459 \text{ min.} \\ &= 8,262 \text{ prey} \times 3.5 \text{ cal. each} \\ &= 28,917 \text{ cal.} \times 75\% \text{ digestive efficiency} \\ &= 21,687 \text{ cal.} \end{aligned}$$

Territory versus flock profitability

Owners sometimes left their territories to feed with the flock, but they kept returning to the river at regular intervals to evict any intruders that had landed there while they were away (Davies 1976). The owners' change in behaviour when they joined the flock was remarkably quick. I often saw two territorial neighbours vigorously chasing each other and displaying at a territory boundary and then, less than a minute later, both feeding peacefully side by side in the flock.

Faeces analysis showed that the same sized items were taken in both the territories and the flock, so feeding rate measurements give a good idea of their relative profitability. On some days, the feeding rates were highest in the flock, yet the owners still often spent most of their time on territory, forgoing the short-term gain that they would have enjoyed from joining the flock. It seems likely that the long-term advantage of a predictable food supply on the river outweighed the exploitation of the more ephemeral food supply elsewhere on the meadow, even when this was temporarily more profitable. The long-term advantage of the territories became clear on very cold days, when the meadow froze and the flock birds were forced to seek food elsewhere. At these times, there was a sudden increase in the recovery of dead wagtails from the national ringing scheme (Cawthorne & Marchant 1980). The territorial individuals, however, were still able to feed on their territories during these severe periods because the river continued to wash food up onto the banks.

Defence of a renewing food supply

The key to an understanding of the territorial behaviour of wagtails along the river was that they exploited a renewing food supply. Typically, an owner walked systematically around its territory, picking up insects from the river edge, a circuit which took 40 minutes to complete (fig. 2a). After it had visited a stretch of bank, the food was depleted temporarily, and time was needed for more insects to wash up. Ideally, we might suppose that the territory size would be such that, by the time the owner completed the circuit, enough insects had accumulated onto the river edge for it to feed at a profitable rate the next time round. Similar systematic cropping of a renewing food supply has been recorded in other birds (Bibby & Green 1980; Kamil 1978).

Once the importance of prey renewal has been recognised, the reason for territorial defence becomes obvious. If other wagtails were allowed to land, they would deplete the food, so that an owner would suffer a decreased feeding rate when it next visited the stretch. Some intruders did land on the territories undetected, and this resulted in a sudden decrease in the owner's feeding rate when it came across the depleted stretch (fig. 3). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that owners evicted any intruders that they did detect.

They not only chased off other Pied Wagtails, but also Robins *Erithacus rubecula*, Grey Wagtails *M. cinerea* and Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* which ate insects and so also depressed the owner's feeding rate. One Meadow Pipit was chased so relentlessly that it fell into the river and floated off

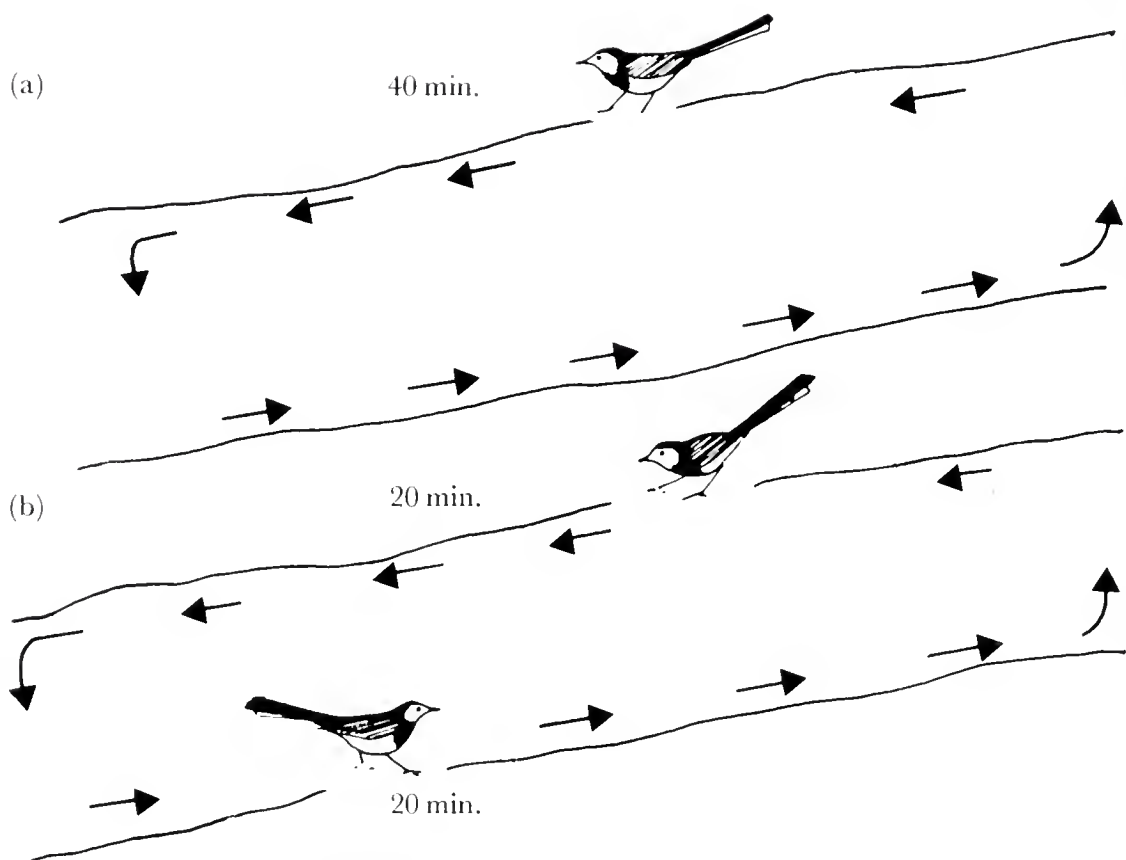


Fig. 2. (a) Owner Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* exploit their territories systematically. The circuit of the river bank takes, on average, 40 minutes to complete. (b) When a territory is shared between two wagtails, each, on average, walks half a circuit behind the other and so crops only 20 minutes' worth of food renewal

downstream. On the other hand, they tolerated the presence of seed-eaters, such as Linnets *Carduelis cannabina*, which did not deplete the insect food supply.

Territory defence, therefore, was the way the Pied Wagtail protected the prey-renewal times on its territory.

Behaviour of intruders

Intruders were very noisy and conspicuous whenever they flew over or landed on the territories, calling loudly 'chisick'. If an owner was present, it replied with a different call, 'cheewee', and the intruder then usually flew off. At first sight, the noisy call of the intruders is puzzling: why didn't they attempt to sneak on to a territory undetected?

Even if they did sneak on, however, they would often end up feeding in places recently depleted by the owner. The most profitable place for an intruder to land would be just ahead of the owner, where the renewal time of insects would be greatest, but here the intruder would be easily spotted. If, on the other hand, it landed some way off, it would be feeding over depleted stretches. Measurements showed that intruders which landed undetected fed at only 11 items per minute on average, which is less than the rate needed to achieve energy balance. It seems, therefore, that intruders benefit by calling, to 'knock on the door', and, if a reply indicates that an owner is in residence, they do better to leave, because occupancy is a sign of a depleted feeding area.

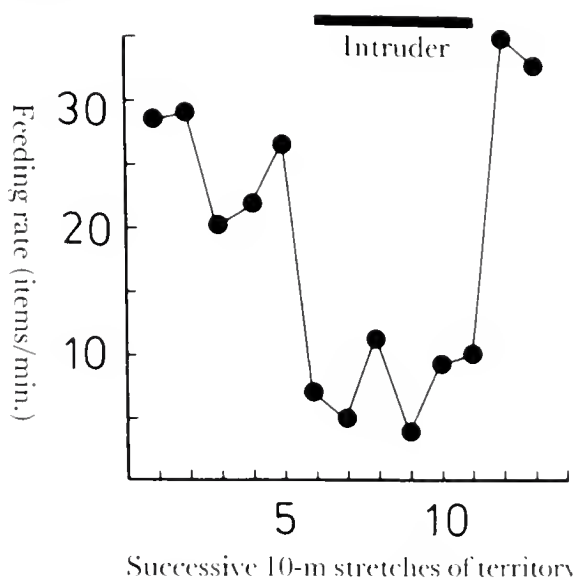


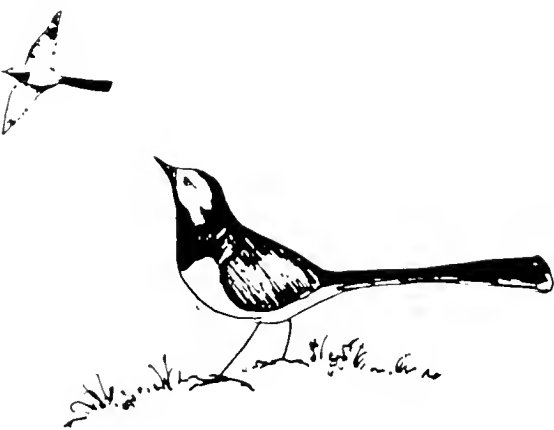
Fig. 3. An intruder Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* landed undetected and fed over a stretch of the territory marked by the horizontal black bar. A few minutes later, the owner came along and suffered a sudden drop in feeding rate over the exact stretch recently depleted by the intruder.

Only territory owners called 'cheewee'. Two observations support the idea that it is an ownership signal. First, whenever an owner flew into another territory, it gave the 'chisick' call typical of an intruder. Secondly, on one occasion, an intruder landed on a territory when the owner was away in the flock. After 20 minutes' trespassing, the owner still had not returned, and the newcomer appeared to build up confidence, because it began to give 'cheewee' calls to other wagtails overhead.

If 'cheewee' is an ownership signal, then we would predict that tape-recordings of 'cheewee' would elicit a strong aggressive response from the owner, because the broadcast would simulate the presence of an intruder who was announcing ownership. I did this playback experiment on seven territories, and on every occasion the owner immediately flew over to the loudspeaker and displayed in front of it. Some hovered persistently nearby for up to 3 minutes after the playback had ended. In contrast, when I broadcast 'chisick', the owners simply replied 'cheewee' and then carried on feeding. They did not approach the speaker and behaved as they normally did to an intruder's call, as if expecting the intruder to retreat on perceiving the ownership signal (Davies 1981).

Territory sharing

Although an owner defended a territory of a fixed size throughout the winter, its defensive behaviour varied depending on the food supply. On days when food was very scarce, it spent much of the time in the flock, but returned periodically to defend its territory. If food was more abundant, the owner spent all day on its territory and occupied it alone. As food increased further, owners often shared their territories by tolerating the presence of another bird. These 'satellites' were usually dull-coloured first-winter birds from the flock, which landed on the territories and appeased the owners with special postures described in detail by Zahavi (1971). In Israel, Zahavi found that satellites tended to be females. I call these birds satellites



	TERRITORY FOOD SUPPLY	
	Good	Poor
Intruder costs	High	Low
Costs of sharing food	Low	High
Predicted action	Accept satellite	Reject satellite

Fig. 4. The food abundance on the territory determines whether it will pay the owner Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* to share its territory with a satellite

because their relationship with the owner is of a very temporary nature (a week, or sometimes just a day or two). It is possible that a satellite is sometimes the future mate of the territory owner, but this is often not the case, since a satellite may be seen appeasing several different territory owners during the course of a winter. Snow (1958) has described similar temporary associations by Blackbirds *Turdus merula* on winter territories.

What determines whether owners accept or evict satellites? The presence of a satellite brings a benefit to the owner because it helps to defend the territory against intruders and neighbours, in many cases doing half of the defence. It also, however, imposes a cost, because sharing the territory means that the owner has less food than it would if it remained alone. Owners and satellites usually shared the territory by each walking, on average, half a circuit behind the other, so that, instead of cropping the food at 40 minutes' worth of renewal time, the owner got only 20 minutes' worth (fig. 2b).

Whether it will pay the owner to accept a satellite depends critically on food abundance (fig. 4). When food is scarce, cutting the food-renewal time by half has a big effect on the owner's feeding rate, so he does better to remain alone. As food abundance increases, however, the cost of sharing the territory decreases and, in addition, because intruder pressure increases, help with defence becomes very beneficial. A mathematical model was used to quantify exactly how these costs and benefits combined to influence the owner's feeding rate. The results showed that, indeed, the owner tolerated a satellite only when the benefits of help with defence outweighed the costs of sharing the food (Davies & Houston 1981). In other words, the owner will share its territory only when it itself will enjoy a higher feeding rate by doing so. It seems likely that owners accept only females or young birds as satellites because they are easier to evict when food on the territory becomes scarce and the owner does better by remaining alone.

In the spring, there is usually a sudden increase in the food supply as small insects emerge with the first warm weather. Owners then stop evicting intruders and tolerate the presence of any wagtail that lands nearby. This makes good sense, because prey are so abundant that a wagtail does not suffer a decrease in feeding rate even if it walks directly in the footsteps of another bird.

Conclusion

It may seem surprising that the wagtail's behaviour is so finely tuned to variations in its food supply, but, by accepting a satellite on days of high food abundance, an owner can increase its own feeding rate by up to 33%. Indeed, making the correct decision over territory sharing is probably an important determinant of whether the owner will get enough food to stay alive. I have no idea as to *how* the owners decide whether to share their territories or not. Obviously, they do not work out mathematical equations! Presumably, they use simple rules; for example, their tolerance of satellites may depend on their own hunger level or on external cues like the temperature, which is correlated with insect abundance.

By whatever means they achieve their behaviour, it is clear that wagtail territorial defence is beautifully designed to increase feeding efficiency in winter.

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European news

Records have been supplied by correspondents in 17 countries for this eleventh six-monthly report on interesting occurrences and status changes in Europe; the tenth report appeared in January (*Brit. Birds* 75: 25-30). This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* FINLAND Sixth record: Gulf of Finland on 14th October 1981 (fourth was in October 1979 and fifth in August 1981).

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* FINLAND May passage along Gulf of Finland and Gulf of Bothnia totals ten to 20 in breeding plumage annually; only sporadic at other seasons.

Albatross *Diomedea* NETHERLANDS 1980 record (*Brit. Birds* 75: 25) not accepted.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* FRANCE Total of 390 pairs in Corsica in 1980. NETHERLANDS Third record: tideline corpse at Noordwijk on 15th November 1981* (1977 record noted in *Brit. Birds* 72: 275, not accepted).

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* LATVIAN SSR First record: Pape bird-station on 10th October 1981.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* FRANCE Côtes-du-Nord: about 40 pairs discovered in 1981 nesting on Sept-Iles. Corsica: no proof of breeding in 1979.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* FRANCE Total of 830 pairs in Corsica in 1980.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* ITALY First evidence of breeding: one or two pairs breeding in large heronry (mainly Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*) at Punte Alberete, south of Po Delta, in 1981.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* BULGARIA Total of 18,700 on autumn passage over Burgas from 10th August to 31st October 1981 (similar total to 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 257).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* FRANCE Pair probably bred at Lac de Grandlieu, Loire-Atlantique, in 1981.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* FRANCE One or two pairs bred at Lac de Grandlieu, Loire-Atlantique, in 1981.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* AUSTRIA Atlas work has revealed more than expected on northern fringe of Alps in Lower Austria. FRANCE

Autumn passage: at least 30 over Col d'Orgambideska, Pyrénées, in 1981. SWITZERLAND Autumn passage: 15 reports from 27th August to 17th November 1981.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* NETHERLANDS Lowest ever number breeding: four pairs in 1981, rearing ten young.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* ITALY Increasingly wintering in Sardinia and on Tyrrhenian coast, and 14 (eight adults, six immatures) at new reserve, Laguna di Ponente di Orbetello.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* SPAIN Only 38,600 on Guadalquivir Marshes in January 1982, half of number counted in January 1980, attributed to combination of starvation and poaching in winter 1980/81.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* LATVIAN SSR First record: two with Finnish rings in January 1982.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* BULGARIA Midwinter count on Durankulak-Sgabla Lakes of 12,200 in early 1982 (cf. 15,000 in January 1979 and over 16,000 in January 1980, *Brit. Birds* 72: 590; 73: 257).

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* FRANCE Population estimate: almost 1,000 breeding pairs. GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Three Camargue-ringed (as well as 27 Scottish-ringed) individuals on Grosser Knechtsand in August-September 1981, proving that some from west Mediterranean move north to main North Sea moulting area.

Teal *Anas crecca* DENMARK Highest recent number: 17,400 at Tippiarne, West Jutland, on 26th September 1981.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* ITALY Female shot in Tuscany in December 1981.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* NORWAY Second record: three males and a female in Östfold on 16th April 1980.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* FRANCE Sixth to eighth records: male in Vienne

during 16th-23rd March 1980, female in Ardennes on 19th October 1980* and male near Marne on 22nd March 1981*. GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Adult male near Göttingen, Lower Saxony, on 23rd April 1980*.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* NORWAY Fourth record: adult male in Akershus on 26th-27th May 1980.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* NETHERLANDS Third record: second-winter male at Texel from 24th-30th December 1981 and at IJmuiden from second week of January 1982.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* FRANCE Nine records, mainly since 1979, after first in 1974.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* SPAIN Three in Doñana National Park in December 1981, the first since one found dead in summer 1973.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* BULGARIA Burgas, between Glumtshe and Zimen, on 24th April 1980 (per Dr D. Nankinov). FRANCE Second 20th-century record: Villard-lès-Dombes, Ain, on 18th April 1979 (first was in Crau in 1973).

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* BULGARIA First since 1972: ill immature (probably pesticide-poisoning) in Tolbukhin on 20th October 1980 (now in captivity in zoo).

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* ITALY Good numbers summering (but not breeding) in Eastern Alps.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Near Plön, Schleswig-Holstein, on 28th August 1981 (very rare in north; usually occurs in southwest).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* FINLAND First breeding: nestling at Kiihtelysvaara, eastern Finland, in 1933 discovered recently in Kuopio Museum; total of 42 Finnish records.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* FINLAND Breeding record in 1894 now rejected; first records in 1912, 1928 and 1964; first bred in 1964, almost annual in 1970s. NORWAY Sixth record: adult male in Vest-Agder during 19th May to 8th June 1980 (cf. continuing increase in breeding numbers in Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 72: 590; 75: 26).

Buzzard *Buteo buteo* BULGARIA Largest ever autumn passage: 26,900 over Burgas during 10th August to 30th October 1981 (peak of 11,280 on 2nd October). DENMARK Largest ever autumn passage in north Zealand: 3,700 at Helleback on 17th September (passage in east Zealand at more normal level).

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* YUGO-

SLAVIA First record for Slovenia: two adults near Kozjna on 23rd January 1982.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* NETHERLANDS Second record: Kerkrade, Limburg, on 11th November 1979 (record at Groenekan on 9th July 1977 noted previously, *Brit. Birds* 71: 255, not substantiated).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* FINLAND Breeding population stable or slightly increasing in 1970s, with 900-1,000 pairs; 1.3-1.4 young produced per occupied territory per year.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* BULGARIA Largest ever autumn passage: 1,370 over Burgas during 10th August to 30th October 1981 (peak of 824 on 26th September).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* AUSTRIA First breeding since 1967: pair successful on Illmitzer Zicksee, Burgenland, in 1981.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* DENMARK Total of 3,500 pairs in 1980 (2,300 in last census, in 1970).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* FRANCE Second 20th-century record: south Brittany/Finistère in September 1981 (first was in 1918).

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Fourth record: near Zahlinice, Moravia, on 28th March 1981.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* DENMARK 'Quite common' in autumn 1981, with several records of over 100 in August-September.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* NORWAY Seventeenth record: Finnmark on 27th May 1979. SWITZERLAND Rheindelta on 23rd September 1981.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* NORWAY Seventh record: Rogaland in 1980. SWITZERLAND Wauwilermoos during 14th-22nd November 1981.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Near Hannover, Lower Saxony, on 15th May 1981*. NORWAY Third record: Rogaland on 15th May 1980 (second was in June 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* NETHERLANDS Second record: Amsterdam on 23rd August 1980.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* FRANCE Up to 1,000 around Ushant during 9th-15th October 1981.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* NORWAY First breeding record in southern half of country: one pair on Runde, Møre og Romsdal, in 1980.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Second Bavarian breeding record: pair hatched two young on artificial gravel-covered raft on Ammersee in 1981, but both killed by Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* also nesting on raft (*Ang. Orn. Ges. Bayern* 20: 170-173).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* FRANCE Up to 2,000 off The Pertuis, Charente-Maritime, on 29th-30th August 1981.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* ITALY First proved breeding in Sicily: one pair in 1980; range expanding, especially in Sardinia and in Po Valley.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* FRANCE Total of 63 pairs in Corsica in 1981 (27 pairs in 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 576).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* ITALY Breeding proved (up to ten pairs) at Lake Garda in 1979. ROMANIA Some pairs nesting on buildings even right inland in Bucarest since 1977.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* FRANCE Fifth record: adult off Charente-Maritime in July 1981.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* ITALY First breeding on Lakes of Mantova in central Po Valley; Italian population declining sharply, apparently due to habitat loss and pesticide use, especially in western Po Valley.

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* FRANCE First record: Ushant, Finistère, from 12th-14th October 1981.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* BELGIUM First two records since 1949: singing in Ardenne in spring 1981*, and one ringed on Heligoland, German Federal Republic, found dead in east Belgium in June 1981.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* LATVIAN SSR Invasion in autumn 1981: 74 trapped (previous invasions in 1974 and 1975).

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* LATVIAN SSR Third record: 1981 (second was in winter 1979/80, *Brit. Birds* 73: 576).

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* NETHERLANDS Third record: Castricum, Noord-Holland, on 10th October 1980 (first, in October 1960, was at same locality; second was in August 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 256).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* FINLAND First record: Säppi bird-station, Gulf of Bothnia, during 2nd-5th October 1978; also two there in 1980 (previously noted as first record, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28).

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* AUSTRIA Discovered during atlas work in several more places in northwestern Lower Austria and Upper Austria north of Danube (cf. *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 73: 576-577).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* BULGARIA First invasion for several years: small numbers in Sofia in January 1982. DENMARK Irruption: starting in mid October 1981; several flocks of about 300; last individuals seen at end of December. FAEROE ISLANDS Small flocks in Tórshavn during 1st-10th November 1981.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* YUGOSLAVIA Strong autumn passage: 11 in 1981 (one in 1976, one in 1977, five in 1978, one in 1980); never any in spring.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FRANCE Three of one of eastern races (*maura* or *stejnegeri*), on 18th February 1978, 9th October 1978 and 13th April 1980.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* FINLAND Second record: adult male at Långskär bird-station, Åland, on 21st October 1981 (first was at same locality, in October 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* FINLAND Fourth record: adult male near Tampere, south Finland, for almost two weeks from 14th November 1981 (previous three all in early 1950s).

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* FINLAND Second record: Dragsfjärd on 1st November 1981*.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* BELGIUM Strong spring passage: 240 in 1981. DENMARK Unusually high numbers widespread from late September to mid October 1981.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Third record and first this century: two near Prague on 15th March 1980.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* FRANCE Fourth 20th-century record: one killed at Mallemort, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 18th or 19th November 1978.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* FINLAND Ninth record: male *T. r. atrogularis* at Tauvo bird-station on 9th May 1981. LATVIAN SSR Second record: *T. r. atrogularis* in 1981.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* ROMANIA Increase in 1981 in most southerly known nesting area around Brasov (cf. *Brit. Birds* 73: 260; 75: 28).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* NORWAY First record: Rogaland on 29th September 1980.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Third Bavarian record: two (pair?) near Ammersee from 2nd May to 12th July 1981, three on 4th July (*Ang. Orn. Ges. Bayern* 20: 169-170).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* NORWAY Third record: singing, Vestfold on 29th-30th June 1980 (cf. second Danish record in July 1980 and 13 singing in Sweden in summer 1980, *Brit. Birds* 73: 577; 75: 28-29).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* NORWAY Thirteenth record: Rogaland on 5th September 1980 (cf. record year in Sweden in 1980, with about 205 singing, *Brit. Birds* 75: 29).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* FRANCE First record: Ushant on 20th October 1981*.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* FRANCE Second record for Ushant: immature male found dead on 14th October 1981. NETHERLANDS First record: male at Amsterdam from 14th December 1980 to 22nd February 1981.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* SWITZERLAND First record for Col du Bretolet: caught on 5th August 1981.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* BELGIUM Fourth record: Knokke on 5th November 1981* (third was at same locality in November 1980). FINLAND Highest ever number: 28 in autumn 1981 (total now 91). FRANCE Third record: Ushant on 23rd October 1981.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* FINLAND Highest ever number: 15 in autumn 1981 (total now 93, including 11 in 1980). FRANCE Thirteenth to fifteenth records: Ushant on 10th, 13th and 16th-17th October 1981. NETHERLANDS High autumn numbers: as many or even more than in 1980, which, with about 20, was second only to peak year of 1967.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* FINLAND Fourth record: Lågskär bird-station, Åland, on 2nd October 1981 (third was at same locality, in October 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 262). NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: Vlieland on 5th October 1981, and Maasvlakte on 18th October 1981 (second record was in October 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 257).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* FINLAND Eighth and ninth records: Säppi bird-station on 6th and 26th October 1981*.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* ITALY Recolonisation of Lakes of Mantova in

central Po Valley: one pair in 1976, four or five in 1977, about 15 in 1978, 40-50 in 1979, many in 1980; also expanded breeding range in last decade.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus* LATVIAN SSR Hybrid Azure Tit × Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* trapped at Pape bird-station on 24th October 1981 (third such hybrid to be caught).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* FINLAND Fifth and sixth records: Salo, southeastern Finland, on 22nd October 1981, and flock of seven at Lågskär bird-station, Åland, on 29th-30th October 1981. FRANCE Nest in Alsace in 1979. GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Population increasing east of Hamburg-Hannover-Kassel; isolated breeding west of this line. NETHERLANDS First successful breeding, also unfinished nests at two other places; number of records in summer and autumn indicates small influx.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Increase in West Berlin from 15 pairs in 1979 to 24 in 1980, and in sample area of Lower Saxony (+20%); otherwise continued decline.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* LATVIAN SSR Invasion in autumn 1981: 91 trapped (previous invasions in 1975 and 1977).

Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* BELGIUM Third record: Retie on 13th March 1981 (perhaps, as suspected in cases of first two, an escape).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* AUSTRIA Two more colonies found in northern and central Burgenland (see also *Brit. Birds* 71: 586; 73: 260). ROMANIA Population much reduced, apparently due to large-scale use of granulated pesticides.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* FINLAND First juvenile: Korppoo, south eastern archipelago, during 22nd-28th October 1981*; previous 27 records all adults.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* DENMARK Minor irruption: flock of 20-30 on Zealand in autumn 1981 (also one Two-barred Crossbill *L. leucoptera*).

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* BULGARIA First record: adult male in Blagoevgrad on 23rd July 1979. FRANCE Sixth 20th-century record: Ushant on 18th October 1981.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* FINLAND First record: adult male at Dragsfjärd on 2nd November 1981*.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephala* BELGIUM Tenth and eleventh records: female on 12th October 1980* and male on 1st November

1980*, both at Antwerp; 'seems to become a regular visitor'.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* FRANCE Male in Pas-de-Calais on 25th

May 1980 was fifth record since 1977.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* NORWAY Fourteenth record since 1940: Rogaland on 27th April 1980.

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No information was supplied from Albania, Estonian SSR, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal or Sweden.

Waders in Siberia



PJG

A. J. Prater and P. J. Grant

This special photographic feature is to mark the forthcoming XVIII International Ornithological Congress, which will take place in Moscow in August this year. We are especially grateful to A. J. V. Knystautas for supplying most of the photographic prints, and to the photographers: A. Kondratiev, Y. Shibnev, P. Tomkovich and the late A. Kistchinski

Most British birdwatchers dream of the possibility of spending a summer in northeast Siberia looking at exotic waders in their breeding areas. Not many of us are likely to reach this remote zone, but at least we

can now enjoy some of the birds through the superb set of photographs portrayed here.

The Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis* is seen by few people in its remarkably distinctive summer plumage (plate 83), in which the pale head and neck are contrasted with the dark ear-covert patch and black central patch on the lower breast and upper belly. On the other hand, the Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii* (plate 84), with its much less contrasting



83. Adult summer male Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis* at nest with newly hatched young, Chukotski Peninsula, USSR, July 1979 (P. Tomkovich)

84. Adult summer Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* on nest, northern Yakutia, USSR, July 1977 (P. Tomkovich)



plumage is better known. The ranges of several of what we generally regard as North American species do actually extend west into Siberia: Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* (plate 85) and Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* (plate 86) are two of these. Here they look rather similar: one would expect a more obvious droop to the Western's bill, but this may be due to its being a male, which has a shorter bill than the female. The shape of the dark centres of the



85. Adult summer male Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* on nest, Chukotski Peninsula, U'SSR, July 1979 (P. Tomkovich)

86. Adult summer Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* on nest, Chukotski Peninsula, U'SSR, July 1979 (P. Tomkovich)





87. Adult summer Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* on nest, Chukotski Peninsula, USSR, June 1978 (P. Tomkovich)

88. Juvenile Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, USSR (Yuri Shibner)

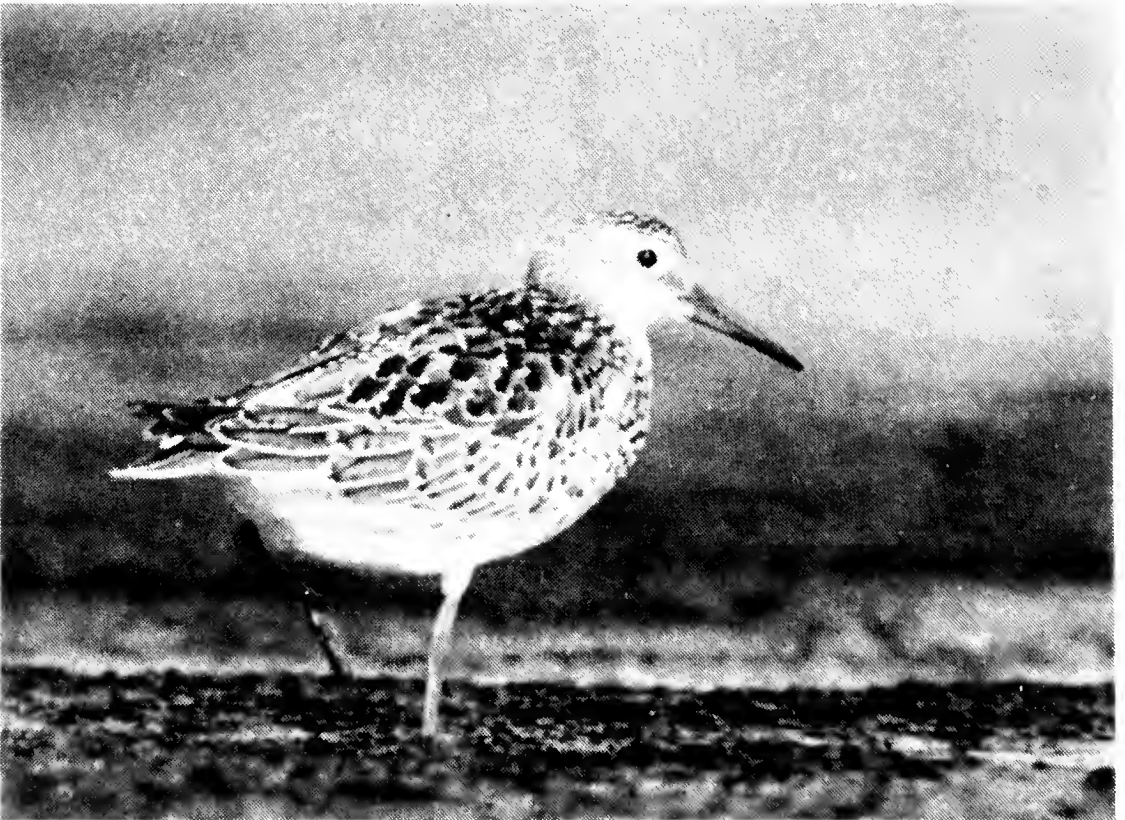


scapulars is different, and this may be a constant distinction. In the field, however, at least the predominantly rust-coloured scapulars of Western would be an obvious difference from Baird's.



89. Juvenile Knot *Calidris canutus*, USSR (Yuri Shibnev)

90. Juvenile Greater Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, USSR (Yuri Shibnev)



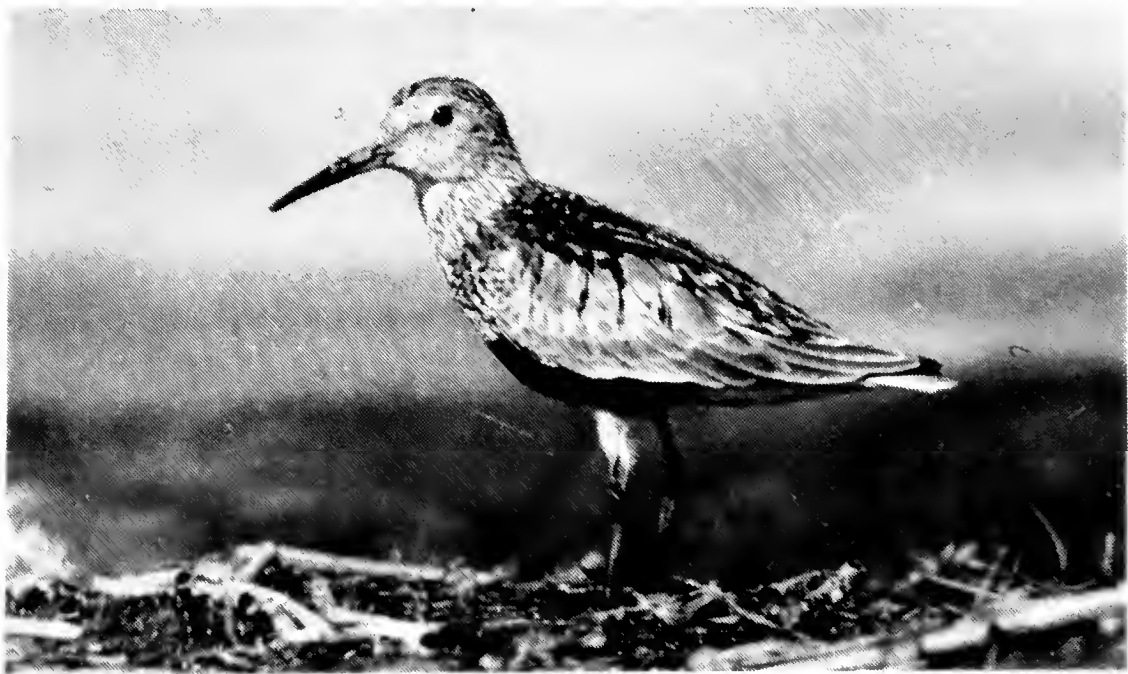


91. Adult summer female Greater Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* on nest, Koryakskoye Highland, USSR, June 1976 (P. Tomkovich)

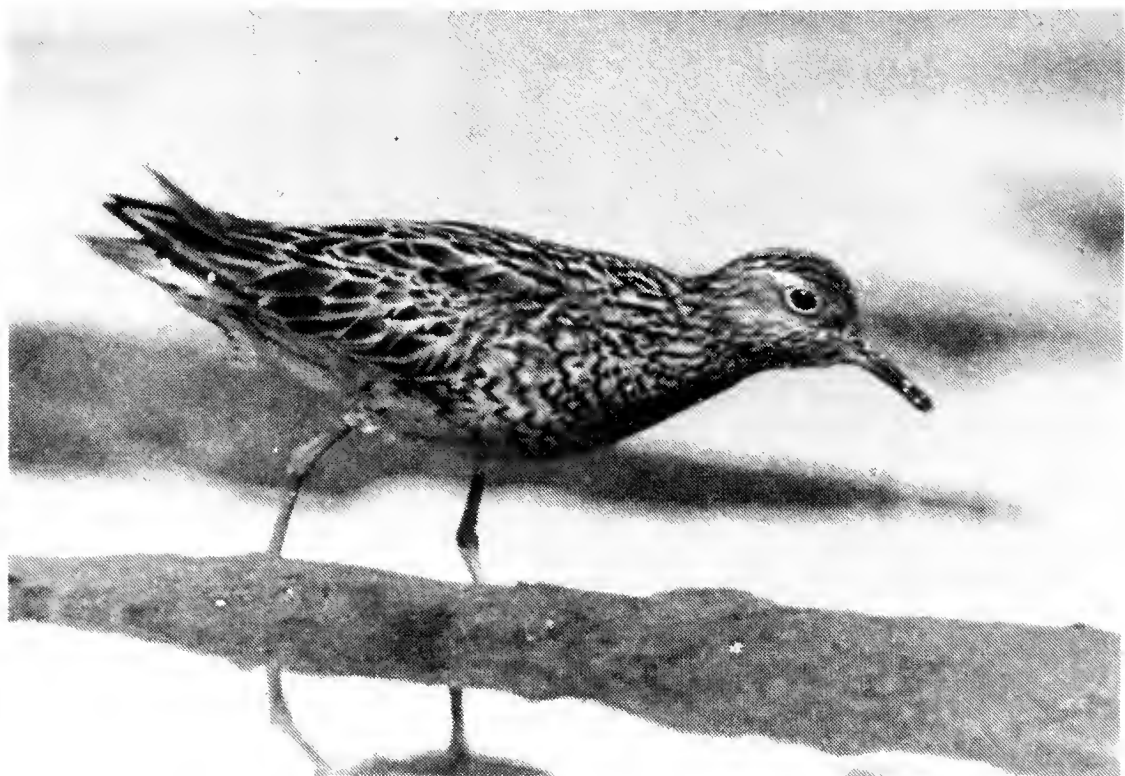
On the adult summer Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* (plate 87), the even, brick-red coloration, extending from supercilium to breast, is diagnostic. The juvenile (plate 88) lacks any obvious pale mantle V, and the coverts are rather plain grey contrasting with the more variegated scapulars—both good differences from juvenile Little Stint *C. minuta*—but supposed differences in bill shape would seem to be subtle at best!

The Greater Knot *C. tenuirostris* (plates 90 and 91), which has occurred in Morocco, is widely discussed as a potential future addition to the British and Irish list. Few observers have even seen photographs of the species, let alone had experience of it in the field.

92. Adult summer Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, USSR (Yuri Shubner)

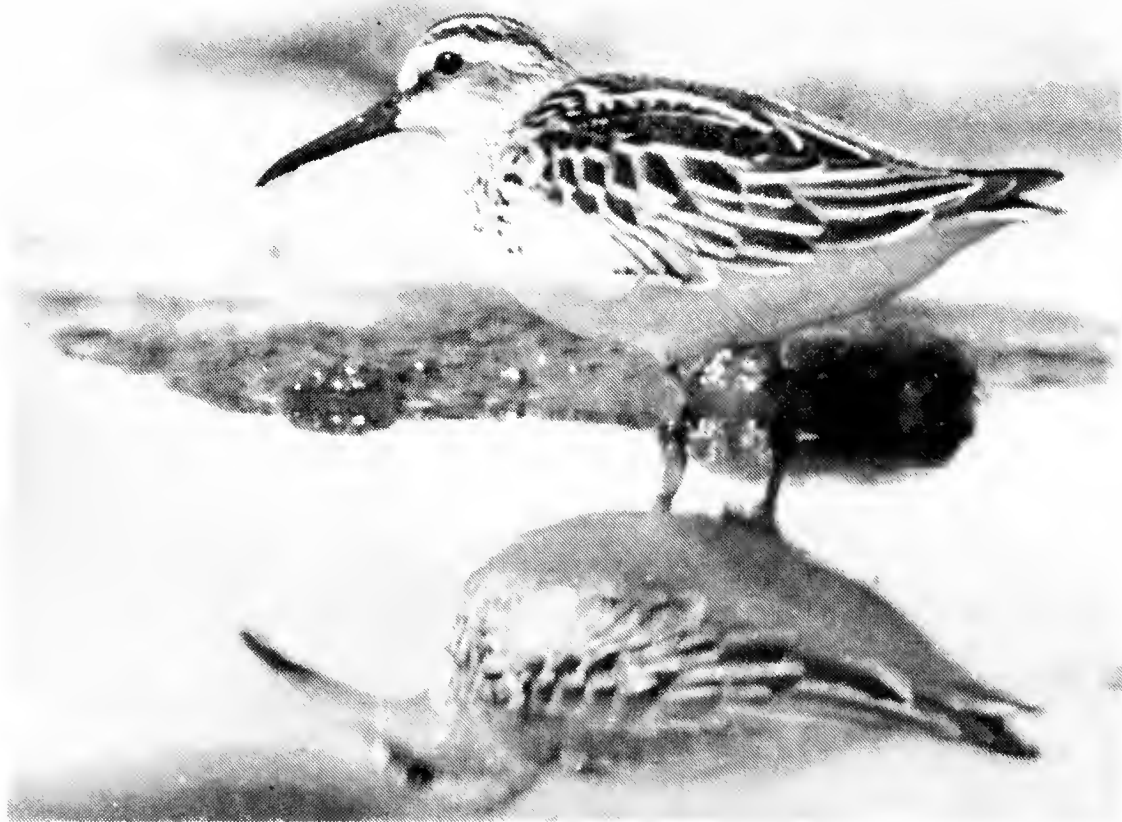


A particularly valuable comparison is provided by the juvenile Knot *C. canutus* (plate 89) and the juvenile Greater Knot (plate 90). The faintly-marked breast and distinctive subterminal dark lines on the scapulars and coverts of the more familiar species are very different from the latter's



93. Adult summer Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, USSR (Yuri Shibnev)

94. Juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, USSR (Yuri Shibnev)





95. Adult summer Long-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, USSR (Yuri Shubnev)

dark-spotted breast and dark-centred scapulars with pale, spotted fringes. Greater Knot has a longer, stouter and more downwards-inclined bill than Knot; on the adult female (plate 91) the vast, downcurved bill is prominent, as is the well-defined (actually brilliant chestnut) area across the scapulars.

Plate 92 shows a strikingly unusual plumage of Dunlin *C. alpina*, where grey, winter-type coverts provide contrast with the summer upperparts and

96. Adult summer Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, USSR, June 1977 (P. Tomkovich)





97. Adult summer Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* on nest, USSR, June 1973
(A. Kondratiev)

98. Adult summer female Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, USSR, June 1970
(A. Kistchinski)





99. Adult summer male Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* at nest, USSR, July 1973
(A. Kondratiev)

black belly. We know how clear is the supercilium of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *C. acuminata*, but, in full summer plumage (plate 93), the feature is not always obvious. The extensive chevrons on the breast, upper belly and flanks show clearly. The juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (plate 94) shows well the characteristic striped upperparts and head, and kink-tipped bill.

Summer-plumage dowitchers can be difficult to identify in black-and-white, but plates 95-97 show Long-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus*. Here we have to look at the broad black tail bars (plate 95) or the large number of dark, crescentic bars on the breast-sides (plates 96 & 97). The Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus* has more white than black on the tail, and (in summer plumage) is spotted rather than barred on the breast-sides. Calls, and belly colour (typically white on adult summer Short-billed and orange or chestnut on Long-billed), would help in the field.

Finally, the adult female and adult male Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* (plates 98 & 99) show clearly the surprisingly broad, two-coloured bill, and the male's much better camouflage.

Product reports

In this new feature, we shall periodically be reviewing commercial items of interest to birdwatchers. The items included will have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews will give the personal opinion of the reviewer; they will not be technical tests, but assessments as a result of use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. It is, however, our aim to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. Eds

Bushnell Spacemaster II 20-45×60 prismatic telescope

To some extent, choice of an optical instrument depends upon personal preference. Everyone, however, can appreciate quality, whether or not design or some other consideration accords exactly with their own ideal image: the 'Bushnell Spacemaster' is widely recognised as one of the best telescopes on the market.

Assuming that they are using it in conjunction with a pair of binoculars, most birdwatchers seldom feel the need for their telescope to have a magnification of less than 20×. Heat-haze, mistiness, dull light or wind-shake also make use at higher magnifications (up to 50× or 60×) difficult and often impossible; indeed, they will be needed only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to read a ring-number). The range 20-45× seems ideal. For those not requiring a zoom facility, fixed-magnification eyepieces are available for the Spacemaster to (15× to 60×; the 20× or 22× wide angle perhaps being best for general use).

Optical quality is high, with no distortion or colour aberration; light-gathering is excellent: dusk-watching is easier with a Spacemaster than with the naked eye or with most binoculars.

The screw-in zoom eyepiece can be positioned so that the magnification indicator 'window' is in whatever position best suits the operator. The wide, well-ridged focusing wheel is situated on the side of the scope, close to the eyepiece. As with every zoom telescope which I have tried, some focus readjustment is always necessary after a change in magnification; with the Spacemaster, the two controls are so well positioned that zooming and refocusing can be carried out simultaneously using the fingers of only one hand. New models have a small sighting tube positioned above the eyepiece, which might be useful to an inexperienced telescope-user.

The neat, compact shape (31 cm long) resulting from the prismatic design is convenient for bush as well as open-country watching, but does make the use of a good tripod essential. Experienced birdwatchers are now, however, turning increasingly to the constant use of the telescope-on-tripod combination. Weight is, therefore, important: at about 1.05 kg, the Spacemaster is sufficiently light for easy transportation.

This is not the perfect telescope. Spectacle-wearers will find that there is a considerable loss of field of view unless they raise or remove their spectacles before using the telescope. There is also no extendable tube to protect the objective lens from drizzle or from direct sun-glare. These,

however, are my only two criticisms. Well-designed, easy to use, light, neat and optically excellent, this is, in my view, currently the best choice of a telescope for birdwatching. I have owned a Spacemaster II for six years; despite often-rough use, including twice being dropped onto concrete, it is still optically superior to many *new* rival telescopes, and almost as good as a new Spacemaster. Given the choice of any telescope costing less than £500, I would again choose a Spacemaster II 20-45×. At currently advertised prices (variously £112-160), it is excellent value for money. JTRS

Mystery photographs

66 Last month's mystery photograph (repeated here as plate 100) was clearly a small passerine with a bold head pattern, a longish tail, a sleek outline, and a conical bill with an angled cutting edge to the upper mandible. All these characters indicate a bunting; but which one?

It is clearly not a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, and at least the nest habitat eliminates Lapland *Calcarius lapponicus*. The head pattern shows no clear-cut eye-ring, a dark streaked crown and forehead, a very pale supercilium most prominent behind the eye, a thick dark eye-stripe beginning behind the eye, paler ear-coverts (with a very pale spot at the rear), dark moustachial stripe reaching the base of the bill, pale sub-moustachial stripe, and thin, rather weak, dark malar stripe reaching the bill. The flanks and breast-sides show well-marked dark streaking.

The bold head pattern, the nest habitat, the lack of an obvious eye-ring, the lack of a prominent dark patch on the sides of the neck or breast extending from the malar stripe, and the streaking on the sides of the breast and flanks, narrow our bird down to a female of one of three species: Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*, Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, or Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola*. The latter species can be eliminated by the lack of a neat pale crown stripe and because the breast and flank streaking is too extensive and bold, so we are left with two species.

In reality, identification would be easier if colours could be noted, since the Girl is buff-looking, while the Yellowhammer has a yellower ground colour to both its underparts and its head. The two species have similar head patterns, but there are some subtle differences. The Girl Bunting shows a more eye-catching pale supercilium than the Yellowhammer's, this being heightened by a more uniform dark crown and forehead. Also, the moustachial stripe of the Girl appears slightly more prominent near the base of the bill, and the malar stripe, although weak-looking, is a little more clearly marked than on the Yellowhammer. When one looks closely at Frank V. Blackburn's photograph of a female Yellowhammer (plate 101), these slight differences can be detected, and suggest that our bird is a Girl.



100. Female Girl Bunting *Emberiza citrinella* on nest, Somerset, summer 1957 (J. F. Reynolds)



101. Female Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* at nest, Surrey, June 1972 (Frank V. Blackburn)

The mystery bird also shows the lack of a pale (yellow) forehead found on the Yellowhammer, which adds weight to our identification of it as a Girl. If our bird moved, to be observed side-on or front-on, another important identification feature would be noted. The underparts of the Girl are clearly

marked with evenly spaced fine dark streaks which extend well down into the belly (shown clearly in a photograph by A. N. H. Peach: *Brit. Birds* 71: plate 110). The Yellowhammer has more blotchy rusty-brown streaking, not only appearing less well-marked, but also being more confined to the breast. Most standard field guides give little help in separating females of these two species, apart from giving differences in rump colour (brownish/olive on Cirl, and chestnut on Yellowhammer) and flight note (a quiet 'sip' or 'sissi-sissi-sip' from the Cirl, and a more metallic 'chip' or 'tillip' from the Yellowhammer). Most show the female Cirl Bunting poorly; only Lars Jonsson, in his Penguin Nature Guides series, seems to depict the bird correctly. Our mystery bird is indeed a female Cirl Bunting, photographed by J. F. Reynolds in Somerset in 1957.

A. H. DAVIS



102. Mystery photograph 67. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Breeding Bitterns in Cambridgeshire 5,000 years ago

J. C. U. Day and J. Wilson (*Brit. Birds* 71: 285-300), H. J. Harvey (*Brit. Birds* 71: 466) and G. P. Catley (*Brit. Birds* 72: 238) have given valuable data on the recent history of Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*. My study of 5,000-year-old bird bones from Cambridgeshire fen peat (pollen zone VII) sheds light on their earlier history. Of 14 species so far identified, bones of Bitterns were the second most numerous (at least 21 individuals, including three juveniles). I can find only one record of Bittern from British deposits older than 5,000 years: dated about 9,488 years before the present (J. G. D. Clark, 1954, *Excavations at Star Carr, Yorkshire*). As would be



expected from the data presented by Day & Wilson, and by K. Allsopp and S. C. Madge (*Brit. Birds* 72: 248), the species seems to have been absent from Britain during the persistently low temperatures of the Last Glaciation. As the British Isles became available for colonisation, Bitterns would have been able to move across the land area which existed between the Continent and Britain until about 6,000 years ago; at that time, the East Anglian forest was being replaced by fenland (H. Godwin, 1978, *Fenland: its ancient past and uncertain future*), which evidently provided a readily available habitat for breeding colonies of Bitterns.

E. MARJORIE NORTHCOTE

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Black Kites 'playing' with airborne objects Aerial play by Black Kites *Milvus migrans* is relatively common at Khartoum, Sudan, and has increased noticeably over the last 17 years, reflecting the great increase in the amount of liftable rubbish in the streets and open places. Most of these thermally lifted objects are large pieces of paper, polythene sheeting and polythene bags, which are sometimes carried up to heights above 1,000m by 'dust-devils'. On one occasion, I saw a Black Kite intercept and fly off with a small, slowly rising white tracking balloon released by the local meteorological station. Black Kites frequently grasp the objects with their feet, and carry them a short distance before dropping them. Some objects seem to be collected as nesting material: it is not uncommon to find them in nests around Khartoum. Sometimes, the kites find it difficult to disentangle their feet from polythene sheeting, and it is not uncommon to see them trailing strips behind them, at times with fatal consequences; during the autumn of 1978, I found three dead kites at the local roost, hanging from trees by polythene strips tangled around their feet and caught in the trees. Three times since 1978, I have also seen aerial play by migrant Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* similar to that described by L. J. Davenport (*Brit. Birds* 71: 220), except that they were attracted to objects with which Black Kites were already playing.

ANTONY PETTET

Botany Department, University of Khartoum, Khartoum, Sudan

Hobby hunting close to Montagu's Harrier At 05.15 GMT on 13th July 1979, about 3km northeast of Berdum, north Spain, I watched a male Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* gliding and flapping low over a field of ripe barley. A male Hobby *Falco subbuteo* then appeared to stoop at the harrier, but stopped well short of it and rose in the air; the harrier seemed undisturbed. My immediate impression was of the Hobby mobbing the harrier, but this appeared incorrect: instead of attacking it, it simply 'waited-on', maintaining its height about 45m above and behind the harrier. Twice it started to bank and swoop towards the harrier, but dropped only a few metres before swinging up to wait-on again. I watched both raptors for about 20 minutes, during which time the harrier made no attempt to drop onto or seize any prey. Once a small bird flushed to one side of it; the waiting Hobby immediately swooped, apparently to attack the

prey; the bird, however, was close to a hedge and must have escaped, as the Hobby passed near the hedge and rose again. The harrier gave no impression of having even seen the bird: it maintained its hunting flight, quartering the fields until out of sight (the Hobby, higher in the air, remained in view longer). My ultimate impression was that the Hobby was using the harrier to flush out prey.

A. G. PARKER

2 Pilgrim Road, Boston, Lincolnshire

Hobby using plucking platform Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* have long been known to take newly caught prey back to an old nest (usually a hawk nest not far from the nest site being used), where it is plucked ready for eating. Plucking platforms have also been used by Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (Brit. Birds 25: 151-155), but I have not found any reference to other raptors using old nest platforms for breaking up prey items. In late July 1979, while approaching the nest of a Hobby *F. subbuteo*, an adult left the tree near a dilapidated nest of a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. This old nest, more a platform, contained a newly caught Skylark *Alauda arvensis* which had been decapitated and plucked clean by the adult Hobby, which I assumed was preparing small amounts of food and feeding the newly hatched young. My observations at other nest sites, made when the young were large and old enough to deal with whole prey items, suggest that Hobbies usually pluck prey near or in the top of a dead tree or exposed bare branch before taking it to the nest. Plucking platforms might be used more commonly by adults when the young are tiny and unable to break up large prey, especially if an old nest is situated near the nest site.

KEVIN BAKER

British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR

The use by Hobbies of plucking platforms is not mentioned in *BWP* vol. 2. Eds

Bill colour of Crested Coot On trips to Spain in May and to Morocco in January we had the opportunity to study several Crested Coots *Fulica cristata*. We found that perhaps the easiest way to tell them from Coots *F. atra* was the different bill colour. The bill and shield of the Coot appears to be all-white; at close range a pinkish tinge on the bill can usually be seen. The Crested Coot, however, has a mostly bluish bill contrasting markedly with the whitish shield. This character was often visible at distances where other ones, such as the shape of the feathering at the base of the bill and the presence of knobs (especially when very small), were difficult to establish. None of the common field guides points this out. It is, however, mentioned by Cramp *et al.* (1980) and by Etchécopar & Hüe (1964), but neither stresses it as the good field-mark we believe it to be. We do not know if this character is constant throughout the year; we suggest that observers should look for it.

PER ALSTRÖM and URBAN OLSSON

Pl. 307, 5-436 00 Askim, Sweden

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 ETCHÉCOPAR, R. D., & HÜE, F. 1964. *Les Oiseaux du Nord de l'Afrique*, Paris.

Distraction behaviour of Great Bustard In a species as difficult to study at the nest as the Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, it is hardly surprising that little appears to have been written about its distraction behaviour. Brehm (1874) mentioned that a female with chicks will flutter off, feigning lameness; Schuster (1927) reported a hen, flushed from a nest with eggs, lying 150m away as if helpless, the front of her body pressed hard against the earth, fluttering her half-open wings, for about half a minute; Gewalt (1959) saw similar behaviour only after eggs had hatched; and Dementiev & Gladkov (1951) referred to various stratagems for confusing potential predators, especially running off with tail elevated and wings drooping.

On 13th June 1979, in the Alto Alentejo region of Portugal, I had been walking along a track at the edge of some cultivated land and had just sat down on a tussock when, after a few seconds, a female Great Bustard about 40m off moved away in a halting trot with wings half opened; this immediately drew my full attention, since bustards disturbed at such close quarters normally at once fly some considerable distance. The bustard was moving along a furrow in a freshly ploughed and planted vineyard; her gait

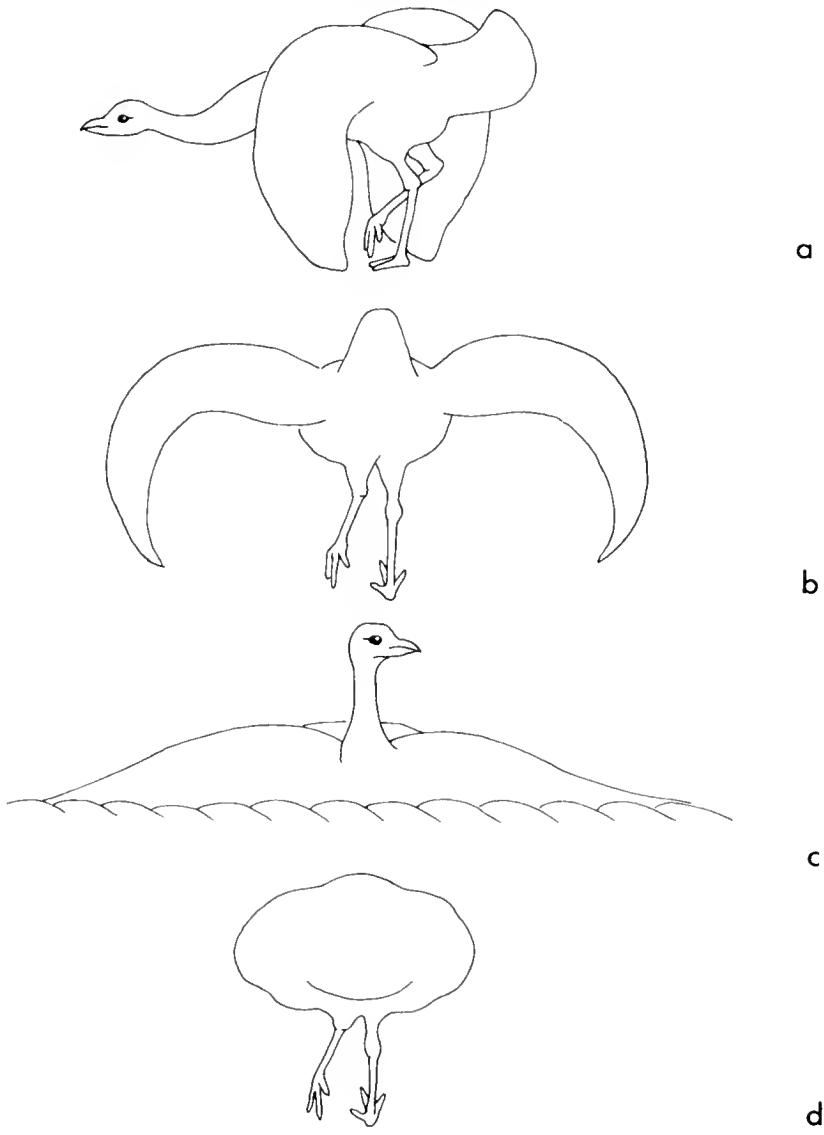


Fig. 1. Postures adopted by female Great Bustard *Otis tarda* during distraction display, Portugal, 1979 (drawn by Susan House)

was rather tottery, her body swaying slightly from side to side, as if her legs could only just bear her weight. Her wings were held out stiffly from her body, horizontally, but strongly arching so that the tips almost touched the ground; they appeared 'fixed' rigidly to the body so that, as she trotted and her body swayed, they rocked awkwardly in synchrony (fig. 1a). Her tail was held erect in the normal alert position, with the central feathers raised and the side ones fanned down to form a laterally-compressed vane. Her neck was stretched horizontally forwards, the head below the level of the back, so that the bird appeared to be overbalancing forward (fig. 1b). The bustard sat down in the furrow, facing me, about 75m away. She flattened herself behind the ridge, with wings stretched out along the ground, head and neck hidden, but tail still erect; she flapped her wings feebly, and the general impression of debility was convincing. She sustained these actions for over two minutes, raising her head at intervals to observe any response (fig. 1c), until I retreated. After I had backed off about 10m, she got up and began to run into some adjacent rough herbage: with body plumage ruffled and raised, wings now folded loosely to the flanks and tail depressed, head and neck hunched down in front of the shoulders, she traversed the plough in a much more assured, gentle undulating trot. From a direct rear view, her body had an elliptical shape, producing an astonishing resemblance to a large mammal creeping away (fig. 1d). When she reached the edge of the vineyard, at about 120m, she became more relaxed, adopting the more usual upright, watchful 'stance', with only head and upper neck visible above the plants.

Since I noticed the bustard only several seconds after I had sat down, she may have begun her display much closer to me, my action in sitting provoking the response. She probably had non-flying young; I made no attempt to find them, but withdrew completely from the area.

Dr Andrzej Bereszymski of the Polish Zoological Institute has told me (verbally) that, on one occasion when he was visiting a well-incubated nest, and not expecting the hen bustard to be present, she in fact jumped up when he was 2m away; she extended her right wing and dragged it along the ground, scuttling off with neck extended forwards, moving in a curving path for about 30-40m before flying several hundred metres; as she ran, she gave a soft disyllabic note like a raptor alarm call.

PAUL D. GORIUP

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 DEMENTIEV, G. P., & GLADKOV, N. A. 1951. *Plitsy Sovetskogo Soyuza*, vol. 2. Moscow.
 GEWALT, W. 1959. *Die Grosstrappe*. Wittenburg Lutherstadt.
 SCHUSTER, L. 1927. Einige brutbiologische Beobachtungen aus dem Jahre 1926. *Beitr. FortpflBiol. Vögel* 3: 52-56.

Bill colour of winter adult Common Gull *The Handbook* does not differentiate between the summer and winter bill colours of the Common Gull *Larus canus*, although P. J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 72: 147) stated of adult winter: 'bill all pale or with thin dark subterminal band, the latter perhaps indicating third-winter rather than full adult.' In the London area in 1978,

1979 and 1980, I observed the bill colours of 587 adult winter individuals (September to April): 583 (> 99%) showed a dark subterminal band or mark on the bill and four (< 1%), recorded outside the midwinter months of November, December and January, were seen without a band or mark. Clearly, the acquisition of a dark subterminal band or mark in winter is normal, and not necessarily related to immaturity. It is those with unmarked bills which are exceptional.

P. J. STRANGEMAN

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P. J. Grant did also state (*Brit. Birds* 72: 151), describing adult winter/third-winter Common Gull: 'Bill yellowish, often with greyish base and usually faint dark subterminal band.' EDS

Apparent hybrid Swallow × House Martin From 22nd April to 4th May 1981, an apparent hybrid Swallow *Hirundo rustica* × House Martin *Delichon urbica* was present among migrant hirundines at Fleet Pond, Hampshire. Its jizz was close to that of a Swallow, but its shorter (but deeply forked) tail lacked streamers, and it was shorter-winged, with a consequently less graceful flight. When perched, the angular head shape and bill attitude were distinctly martin-like. The most striking plumage feature was the conspicuous, square, white rump patch, washed uniformly pale pinkish. The upperparts were uniform blackish-blue, lacking the iridescence, maroon forehead and white tail-spots of Swallow. The blue extended below the eye as a clear-cut hood. The off-white underparts were paler than those of a Swallow (obviously so on the underwing coverts), but included the dark throat patch of that species which, however, was variegated, appearing as blotchy maroon at a distance, and was bordered below by a thin gorget of purplish blotches, rather than a solid bluish band. The undertail-coverts and vent were white, appearing contiguous with the rump.

During our first, rather poor, views of the bird, we discussed the possibility of its being a Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica*, but the absence of a buffy collar and supercilium, and the presence of the throat patch, clearly ruled this out. It is, however, conceivable that poor views of an individual such as that described here could well pose identification problems.

G. C. STEPHENSON and T. M. J. DORAN

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Another hybrid Swallow × House Martin, of similar appearance to the one described here, was trapped and photographed in September 1972 at Beachy Head, Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 66: 398-400, plate 60a). The editorial comment at the time noted 13 previous published references to presumed hybrid Swallow × House Martins, and included a photograph of a House Martin actually copulating with a Swallow (plate 60b). EDS

Leg coloration of Little and Reed Buntings D. I. M. Wallace stated (*Brit. Birds* 69: 465-473) that the leg coloration of Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* is 'usually paler and cleaner than that of Reed Buntings *E. schoeniclus*' but he laid no emphasis on this as a distinguishing feature, and the difference is not noted in other literature. The handful of Little Buntings that I have seen in Britain and the many hundreds in Nepal have all invariably shown legs of a deep flesh or pinkish colour, darker on some

individuals than on others, but never approaching, in shade or tone, the dark brown legs of Reed Buntings. Although the legs of a Little Bunting are not always easily seen, the difference between the leg colours of Little and Reed Buntings seems worth noting and emphasising. DAVID G. H. MILLS
Glebe House, Bentworth, Alton, Hampshire GU34 5RA

D. I. M. Wallace has commented that the Little Buntings which he observed in Siberia and Mongolia had bright legs, varying from dark flesh to pale red-brown. In contrast, D. A. Stone, who has handled hundreds of Reed Buntings, has commented that the leg colour appears to vary very little from one individual to another, and is dark brown. Thus, the difference noted by David G. H. Mills appears to be a valid and potentially useful supplementary identification characteristic. EDS

Letters

Daily weather summaries I noticed, in your February issue (*Brit. Birds* 75: 100), a reference to the demise of the Daily Weather Report, which in fact occurred at the end of 1980. The Meteorological Office is, however, now not without a daily record of the weather for general use, because the London Weather Centre publishes a Daily Weather Summary, which is on similar lines to the old DWR. It contains synoptic charts as previously for the four main hours, plus maximum and minimum temperatures, rainfall and sunshine displayed in map form, together with weather observations at selected times. For a small increase on the basic cost, a copy of a satellite picture and upper-air chart is also available. The charts are sent by post once a week and the basic cost is about £100 per annum, but for full details and a sample copy readers should apply to The Climate Department, London Weather Centre, 284 High Holborn, London WC1. DAVID LEE
Meteorological Office, 37 First Avenue, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP7 9BK

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during July 1982 to June 1983. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering January to December 1983.

20th July BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. T. M. Gullick on 'Birds in central Spain'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least two weeks before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

28th July-16th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries,

The Mall, London SW1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri.; 10-1 Sat.

18th September RSPB SOUTHEAST MEMBERS' DAY. University of Sussex. Speakers include Dr J. J. M. Flegg, Richard Porter and Michael Walter. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

21st September BOC. Dr D. C. Houston on 'Vultures'. Central London. Information from Hon. Sec.

25th September RSPB SOUTHWEST MEMBERS' DAY. University of Exeter. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

2nd October RSPB SCOTTISH MEMBERS' DAY. Highland Showground, Edinburgh. Speakers include David Elcome and Robert Gillmor. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

9th October RSPB LONDON DAY & AGM. Cunard International Hotel, Hammersmith. Speakers include Michael Wilkes and Alan Mitchell. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

2nd November BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. British Museum (Natural History), London SW7, 6.30-9.30 p.m., buffet supper. Dr C. M. Perrins and James Hancock on their visit to China. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

5th-7th November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Applications to Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

3rd-5th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Applications to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

3rd-5th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. Bingley Hall, Birmingham.

7th-9th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre. Applications to BTO.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' (not 31st March).

12th February RSPB FILM PREMIERE. Royal Festival Hall.

15th March-10th May YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5 p.m.-7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

25th-27th March ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE ON BIRD CONSERVATION. Jointly organised by the RSPB and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. New University of Ulster, Coleraine. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

25th-28th March BOU AGM. Southampton University. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU.

31st March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

15th-17th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of Warwick. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

Announcements

New member for Rarities Committee The votes of the regional bird recorders and bird observatories in the election for a new member of the Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 74: 314) were: K. E. Vinicombe 32, C. S. Waller 19. Thus, Keith Vinicombe is elected to the Committee as from 1st April 1982, replacing Brian Little who retires as the longest-serving member.

Three Tunncliffe books We are pleased to announce that we have made arrangements with Victor Gollancz Ltd for three books featuring the work of the late Charles Tunncliffe RA—*A Sketchbook of Birds* (£9.95), *Portrait of a Country Artist* (£10.00) and *Sketches of Birdlife* (£10.95)—to be available (post free in UK and Eire) to *BB* subscribers through 'British BirdShop' (see page xi).

New Palearctic bird sound recordings Starting with a special issue of *British Birds* in 1964 called 'A discography of Palearctic bird sound

recordings' covering 1910-64 (a few copies are available, price £2.00, from Mrs Erika Sharrock), we published a succession of supplements covering issues of discs and cassettes up to 1975. Since then, this scholarly compilation has been continued in *Recorded Sound*, the journal of the British Institute of Recorded Sound. Issue no. 72 of October 1978 (pages 830-838) lists recordings published during 1976-78 or earlier (£1.25 plus p&p) and issue no. 81 of January 1982 (pages 41-56) those of 1979-80 or earlier (reprints available for 50p plus p&p). The address for ordering copies is BIRS, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS. Sixty-eight publications on disc or cassette are referred to in the first paper, and 99 in the second. In all, the voices of over 800 species of Palearctic birds have appeared on the 350 or so disc and cassette publications to date. (Information supplied by Jeffery Boswall and Ron Kettle)

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Japanese Crested Ibis Sometimes it is nice to be proved wrong! Such was the case over our recent comment (*Brit. Birds* 75: 187) that the Japanese Crested Ibis can no longer be seen in the wild: no sooner had we gone to press with our story about the last birds in Japan being taken into captivity than we heard the welcome news that two pairs had been found nesting in the Qinling Range of Shaanxi Province in China. The discovery was made by a team from the Peking Institute of Zoology, Shaanxi Province Institute of Zoology, and the province's Forestry Bureau. There is a 1960 record of one shot in the area and also a sight-record from Cho-chan Province from 1978. Hopefully, the welcome increase in ornithological activity in China may reveal some more breeding pairs in due course.

All-Ireland Conference The 16th All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation, organised, as usual, jointly by the IWC and the RSPB, was held during 5th-7th March, at the Sligo Park Hotel in Sligo. This new venue attracted many participants from Northern Ireland as well as from within the Republic, resulting in a friendly gathering with a lively exchange of news and ideas. The organisation was very smooth, thanks to the Sligo Branch of the IWC, especially Noël Murphy, and the steady hand of the IWC's Director, Richard Nairn.

The conference was opened by Tom Fitzpatrick TD, Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, whose main message was that the Irish Government gave its full moral support to the IWC in its efforts in the conservation field, but had no money available for financial support or the actual acquisition of reserves. The conference seemed, to an outsider, to be disappointed, but not surprised by this, although welcoming the public statement of moral backing which could, perhaps, influence industrial or other potential sources of donations.

The lectures and papers included some heavy—but excellently and interestingly presented—stuff on the role of nature reserves in conservation by John Crudass, John Wilson and Dr Alan Craig, followed by rather lighter items on Orkney reserves (Dr Peter Munro), Ireland's Barnacle Geese (Dr David Cabot) and the Peregrine (Dr Derek Ratcliffe). The highlights for many participants, however, were clearly the film *The Commendable Crow*, topically portraying the Chough just as the census of this species is starting (see pages 234-235), and Richard T. Mills's memorable series of magnificent slides and linked recordings of Irish 'sights and sounds of nature'. The Saturday afternoon excursions were blessed by good weather, but the local Barnacle Geese (700 or so) unfortunately decided to spend the day on an offshore island. Perhaps someone saw a

Stonechat but Oscar Merne and I could find none in much suitable terrain, which may suggest a serious decline in that part of Ireland as a result of this winter's weather.

The *BB* mystery photograph competition attracted 50 entries. No-one correctly identified all five, but Bob Scott and Ralph Sheppard each named four out of five, the latter winning the draw for the traditional bottle of champagne. (*JTRS*)

Maidstone birds on display again In 1946, Guy Mannering gave his collection of mounted birds to Maidstone Museum but continued to add to it until his death in 1966. The collection was on display to the public and was much used by local ornithologists. Due to a serious fire which damaged the structure of the building, but fortunately did not harm the Mannering Collection, the Bird Room was closed in 1977. Now, exactly five years later, on 5th June 1982, the Bird Room and the rest of the Natural History Section will reopen to the public. The Bird Room has been completely redesigned, with new cases throughout so that the birds can be viewed under excellent conditions. Although most British species are represented, the Mannering Collection is particularly rich in wildfowl and waders, with many examples of most species in varied natural poses and states of plumage. Many of the 'Mannering' birds were collected from the south coasts of Kent and Sussex during the 'Hastings Rarities' period, and further Hastings Rarities originally purchased by Maidstone Museum from George Bristow have been incorporated into the present displays.

So, for any reader wishing to see a good collection of well-mounted British birds, or to compare differences between similar plumaged birds, or to see birds of historical interest, a visit to Maidstone Museum is recommended. Reopening on 5th June 1982, Maidstone Museum will be open daily except Sundays and Bank Holidays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (5 p.m. in winter) and admission is free. (*Contributed by E. G. Philp*)

News from Strasbourg During 1981, John Parslow and ME completed a study of 'Birds in need of special protection in Europe', which was published by the Council for Europe in English and French in their Nature and Environment Series; a German version is also planned. In reviewing the status of the 72 species included, the authors made a number of recommendations for the future study and conservation of these birds

and their habitats, so it was pleasing to learn that, when the Council's European Committee for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources met for its annual session in March 1982, these recommendations were put forward (along with others covering butterflies, dry grasslands and alluvial forests) for consideration by the Committee of Ministers. What happens next remains to be seen, but hopefully there will be some positive action in western Europe at least. In passing: our congratulations to David Cabot on his re-election as President of the Committee.

'Birds in Northumbria' This is the title of the 1980 Northumberland Bird Report, published by the Tyneside Bird Club. Copies are now available, price £2.75, from the Secretary, K. G. Dures, 5 Bath Terrace, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear.

'Bristol Ornithology' This is a report of a different kind: not a bird report in the usual sense (though it does include a summary of the year's birds), but more an annual journal in which members of the Bristol Ornithological Club publish notes and short papers, covering a wide range of topics, on their own studies. The December 1981 issue (No. 14) is now available, price £1.20 plus 19p p&p, from Ken Hall, The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS18 8SN.

A record of another kind When they wrote to us about *Bristol Ornithology*, Ken Hall, Robin Prytherch and Mike Lord drew our attention to what must surely be an all-time record; they *did* say to us 'not a word about this, though, or we will be shot'. Even so, with our liking for this sort of thing, we have decided to publish and be damned (or shot—the blame lies squarely with us now, not Ken, Robin or Mike!). It seems that *Bristol Ornithology* has now included no fewer than 44 notes by Bernard King and that his *BB* tally is an incredible 134! Perhaps our worthy Editor will consider a special prize for the 150th *BB* contribution, which is probably not all that far away?

Gambia guide An interesting general booklet which has come our way is entitled *A Naturalist's Guide to The Gambia*. It includes all sorts of helpful tips on where to go and what to do, short chapters on habitats and a wealth of information on birds, animals and plants. Nobody going to this splendid piece of West Africa (which now forms part of the new confederation with Senegal, known as

Senegambia) should be without this booklet. Written by Etienne Edberg, it was originally published in Swedish in 1979; this revised English edition has been published by J. G. Sanders, PO Box 24, Alderney, Channel Islands, and is available from him for £4 including p&p.

New Flemish journal We can't understand a word of it—but nevertheless we are pleased to announce the appearance of *Ornis*

Flandriae, a new journal in Flemish produced by Paul Herroelen. It costs 150 Belgian Francs to overseas subscribers, and is available from Paul at Van Asschestraat 33, B-1910 Melsbroek, Belgium.

'Ornis Fennica' *Ornis Fennica* has been published by the Finnish Ornithological Society since 1924. For nearly 60 years, it has been one of the most widely read ornithological journals in the Nordic countries. It

103. Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa*, Finland, June 1977 (Pekka Helo)



is published quarterly. Articles—most of which are in English—are concerned with many of the central questions in modern ornithology, such as evolution, breeding biology, ethology, migration, population dynamics, bird censuses, and long-term changes in their distribution and numbers. Black-and-white photographs of interesting species (such as the Great Grey Owl from no. 4, 1981, shown in plate 103) are now published regularly.

The subscription rate, 60 Fmk (US\$14) per volume, is payable to postal cheque account 7689-8, Ornis Fennica, Department of Zoology, P. Rautatiekatu 13, SF-00100 Helsinki 10, Finland. (*Contributed by Olavi Hilden*).

New RSPB reserves The RSPB has announced the acquisition of two important new reserves. The Loons is a marsh in the northwestern part of Mainland, Orkney, renowned for its breeding ducks and waders: the new reserve covers 36 ha of this superb wetland, and its purchase was made possible with the aid of a World Wildlife Fund grant. At the moment, there are no formal visiting arrangements, but the area can be viewed

quite satisfactorily along its northern side from the A986. Disturbance to breeding birds could be a big problem here, so all birders are asked to pay particular attention to the Society's request that they do not enter the marsh but confine their activities to looking in from the road. There could be disturbance problems at the other new reserve too, where birders are asked to avoid disturbing flocks of waders and wildfowl and to view from a distance: this is at Lough Foyle, where some 1,200 ha of foreshore are now protected. The reserve lies in Northern Ireland, on the Londonderry side of the Lough. This is one of Ireland's best and most famous wildfowl and wader sites, where peak numbers include 25,000 Wigeons *Anas penelope*, 900 pale-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* and up to 1,000 Whooper *Cygnus cygnus* and Bewick's Swans *C. columbianus*.

New recorders for Cornwall and Kent S. M. Christophers, 5 Newquay Road, St Columb Major, Cornwall, has taken over from D. J. Barker as recorder for Cornwall. A. C. B. Henderson, Perry Fields Cottages, Wingham, Canterbury, has taken over from D. W. Taylor as recorder for Kent.

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to March unless otherwise stated.

Until 20th March, the weather was unsettled, with westerlies bringing a series of fronts across the country, and mainly cool air from the northwest. After this period, an anticyclone developed over the south, which eventually brought in much warmer air from the southeast by 25th, with settled but rather misty weather in some coastal areas.

Passerine migrants

In the period of westerlies, arrivals from the south were very few, as were reports of departing winter visitors. One of these, however, was an **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* caught at Rimac (Lincolnshire) in mid-month. The only other record of note

was of 14 **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* at Dungeness (Kent) on 15th. With the arrival of anticyclone weather, the first significant movements began. **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* were heard commonly inland, but the only sizeable coastal fall was 30 on 27th at the Calf of Man. Similarly, **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were found in their breeding localities, with few being halted by adverse conditions on the coast, 15 being most, at Dungeness on 28th. Some displaced passage migrants were found on the coast, **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* being the most prominent species, especially on 28th, when 15 were found at Dungeness, 12 at Bardsey (Gwynedd), four on the Calf of Man and eight at Sandwich Bay (Kent). More **Firecrests** were reported, with eight the maximum during this period, at Sandwich

Bay on 24th, and three at Prawle Point (Devon) on 26th. **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* were also on the move at South Walney (Cumbria), the Call of Man and at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire). An expected migrant was the **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* but it was reported only at Filey Brigg on 27th, Sandwich Bay (two) on 28th, and on

Goonhilly Down (Cornwall). An early **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* on Bardsey on 27th and a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* at Prawle Point on 26th were also reported. Of the hirundines, **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* were the earliest, with a few **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* and **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* being seen at the end of the month.



104 & 105. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Co. Cork, March 1932
(K. Preston)





106. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, March 1982
(S. C. Hutchings)

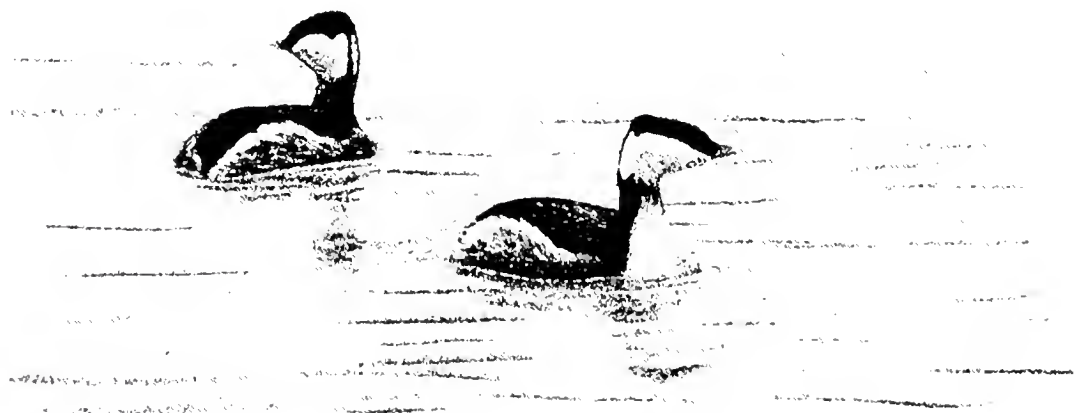
Gulls and terns

The number of **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* reported was quite remarkable. Six were estimated around Plymouth (Devon), seven in Cornwall (plate 106), at least six in Ireland (plates 104 & 105) and singles in north Wales and at Sutton Bingham Reservoir (Somerset). Three others had been estimated present during the winter in Shetland, bringing the total to at least two dozen. Other Nearctic species seen were two **Bonaparte's Gulls** *L. philadelphia*, an adult and a first-winter bird, in Mounts Bay (Cornwall) at the end of the month, and the **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* still in the Plymouth area. From the same locality, there were also reports of three **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* and a **Mediterranean Gull** *L.*

melanocephalus, the latter species also occurring inland, at Sutton Bingham Reservoir. By the end of the month, **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* were reported in small numbers along the coast, and three early **Common Gulls** *S. hirundo* were seen at Fingringhoe Wick (Essex) on 21st.

Wildfowl and grebes

The numbers of **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* reported were the highest for some years. Groups of five were present at Slapton (Devon) and in Leicestershire, four pairs in the Channel Islands, three pairs in Bedfordshire, three at Walberswick (Suffolk), seven in Cornwall, and single pairs in Buckinghamshire and at Sandwich Bay. Hopefully, some will stay to breed. **Slavonian Grebes** *Podiceps auritus*, flocking prior to departure,



numbered about 50 on the Blackwater River (Essex) by mid-month, and a flock of nine was reported from Shetland on 6th.

Birds of prey

An eagle which haunted Shetland during the winter was positively identified as an immature **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* in February, and another passed Spurn (Humberside) on 1st. Elsewhere, a **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* was seen at Cley (Norfolk) in mid-month, a **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* visited Bardsey on 22nd and **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* were observed at Dungeness on 29th, and at Skewjack (Cornwall) in mid March.



Waders and other vagrants

A **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* was a new species for Bardsey on 17th, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was found on Jersey on 28th, and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* remained at Aveton Gifford (Devon) during the month. A **Kentish**

Plover *C. alexandrinus* was reported from Felixstowe Ferry (Suffolk) on 14th. Finally, a **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* was an early vagrant in Co. Cork on 23rd February, while another at Dungeness came at a more normal time, on 28th. Another early vagrant was a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* on Alderney (Channel Islands) on 14th February (the only previous record for the Channel Islands had been on 18th February 1952).

Latest news

Early May: **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Cliffe (Kent); **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Cley; **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Beachy Head (East Sussex) (7) and Warsash (Hampshire); **Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda* Barnsley (South Yorkshire).



Reviews

The Plovers, Sandpipers and Snipes of the World. By Paul A. Johnsgard. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 1981. 493 pages; 32 colour and 32 black-and-white plates; diagrams, numerous maps and line-drawings. £27.00.

We needed a monograph on the waders or shorebirds (Charadrii) of the world, so this well-produced book by a distinguished professional biologist can be warmly welcomed. Though not an obvious author for such a work, Prof. Johnsgard has done a good job within the limitations imposed by a one-volume format, covering the literature well if not exhaustively and meeting most of my own requirements of a monograph (see *Brit. Birds* 73: 52). It is a pity, however, that space considerations excluded planned introductory chapters on population dynamics, migration, and moulting patterns. Even more unfortunate is the omission of the stone-curlews, the Crab Plover, and the coursers and pratincoles (as well as the seed-snipes and sheathbills), most of which are considered 'good' waders by the majority of authorities.

The brief introduction opens with a review of the wader families and of their taxonomy and relationships; this is supplemented by further discussions at the end of each species-account, a source of continuing interest and instruction. Johnsgard recognises 165 species in eight families and 40 genera, the two largest families—the Charadriidae (plovers and lapwings) and the Scolopacidae (sandpipers, snipes, and allies)—being further divided into sub-families and tribes. Considering the difficulties involved, I find this arrangement mostly sound and satisfactory, though some dissension on details is inevitable. The introduction closes with a review of reproductive biology, which includes a discussion of mating systems and, rather arbitrarily, an assessment of wattle, spur and toe variation in lapwings and of outer rectrix variation in snipes. Near the end of the book comes a glossary explaining the Latin and Greek derivations of generic and species names.

Apart from keys to and brief synopses of families, sub-families, tribes and genera, and keys to the species of all but the smallest genera, the bulk of the remaining text is devoted to the formal species-accounts, covering names, subspecies and range, measurements and weights, description (with brief concluding summaries of features to be looked for 'in the hand' and 'in the field'), habitats and foods, social behaviour, reproductive biology, status and relationships, and suggested reading. For the confusing *Calidris* 'peeps' and *Gallinago* snipes, a summary of field marks is given before the relevant species-accounts. Not every aspect of wader biology and behaviour is covered, understandably, but I personally regret that no consistent treatment of distraction-display and related strategies was attempted.

Most species are illustrated, mainly as adults, either by photographs or by the author's own distinctive text-drawings; additionally, two plates by Jon Fjeldså show downy young, and a painting by James McClelland depicts the adult Eskimo Curlew. The chicks of some 35 species are further depicted, mainly by drawings and in a diagram. The book abounds in figures of heads, including a 23-page comparative guide, so that many species are shown thus more than once, but birds in flight are poorly represented.

This book more than adequately fills the empty niche for a single-volume monograph on the waders, and can be recommended.

K. E. L. SIMMONS

A Field Guide to the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe: record 15. By Sture Palmér and Jeffery Boswall. The Swedish Radio Company, Stockholm, 1980. £5.75.

LP number 15 is a supplement to the highly-acclaimed 14-record series published during 1969-73 as a companion-in-sound to *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* by Roger Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom. The original series includes over 1,000 vocalisations from 531 species, including many calls as well as songs, and is an invaluable reference for identification purposes. The inadequacy of most written bird-voice transcriptions can be easily demonstrated. Form a mental impression from the book description before listening to the real thing. What a difference! This new record adds 73 recordings of 54 more species to the collection. They are either recent additions to the European list, or some of those hauntingly labelled 'no known recording' in the original series. They come mainly from the eastern Palearctic and North America; also Turkey, Iran and Nepal. It is inevitable that a few errors will have crept into a compilation such as this: Jeffery Boswall tells me that the Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* on record 4 are Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*, the Veery *Catharus fuscescens* on the new record is a Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus*, and the disc notes for Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus humei* on the new record should read at 01.08: 'Recorded mono, wild, Tuva, USSR, June 1975, B. N. Veprintsev and V. V. Leonovitch', and at 01.30: 'Recorded mono, wild, Turkestan, USSR, May 1974, B. N. Veprintsev and V. V. Leonovitch'. On the new record, calls of Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* will be of especial interest to rarity identifiers, but the major appeal, as for the whole series, is surely an aesthetic one: sit back, with eyes closed, and let imagination fill in the birds and the scenery which go with the sounds. For a start, put me among the breeding colony of Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea* in northeast Siberia!

P. J. GRANT



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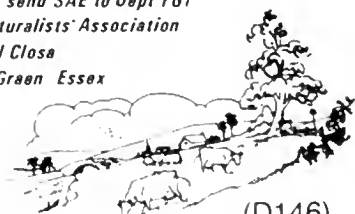
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British Birds

Volume 75 Number 7 July 1982



Codes for rarity-finders and twitchers

Bird Illustrator of the Year

The Richard Richardson Award

Hen Harriers, Long-eared Owls and Short-eared Owls in 1978/79

Points of view · Product reports · Mystery photographs

Bird-photographers: Michael W. Richards

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British Birds

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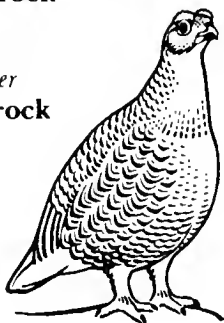
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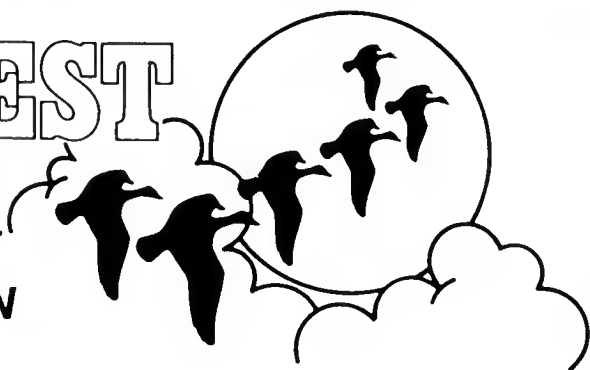
British Birds publishes material dealing with original observations on the birds of the west Palearctic. Except for records of rarities, papers and notes are normally accepted only on condition that material is not being offered in whole or in part to any other journal. Photographs and sketches are welcomed. All contributions should be submitted to the Managing Editor.

Papers should be typewritten with double spacing, and wide margins, and on one side of the sheet only. Authors should carefully consult this issue for style of presentation, especially of references and tables. Vernacular and scientific names and sequences of birds follow **The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic** (1978); names of plants follow Dony *et al.* (1971, **English Names of Wild Flowers**); names of mammals follow Corbet & Southern (1977, **The Handbook of British Mammals**). Topographical (plumage and structure) terms should follow editorial recommendations (*Brit. Birds* 74: 239-242). Figures should be in Indian ink on good quality tracing paper, drawing paper, non-absorbent board or light blue or very pale grey graph paper; lettering should be inserted lightly in pencil; captions should be typed on a separate sheet.

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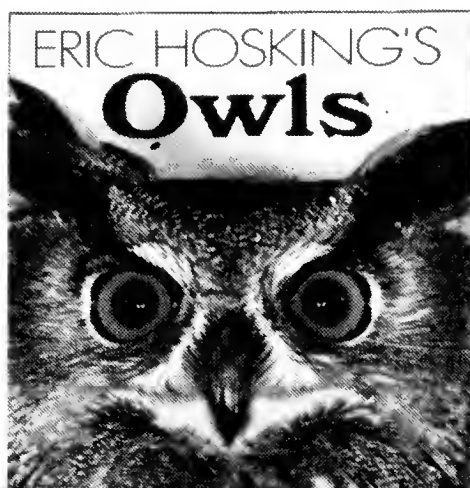
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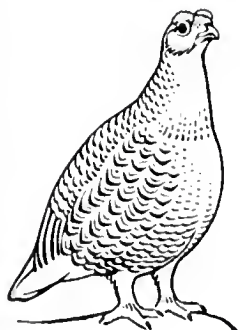
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 7 JULY 1982



Editorial

Codes for rarity-finders and twitchers

Travelling to see a rare bird—twitching as it is now widely known—has become an increasingly popular pursuit during the last decade. A nationwide telephone grapevine can spread the news of a rarity within hours. If the species is one which few observers have seen in Britain, as many as a thousand or more may visit the site within a matter of days. Even a lesser rarity, such as a Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* or an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, may attract a hundred or more, especially if it occurs in a 'quiet' period for rarities, or in a popular birdwatching area.

The growth of twitching has forced improving organisation and a more responsible approach among its participants, with the result that, in the last year or two, the number of instances of significant disturbance or harm to bird, habitat or people at rare-bird venues has been relatively very small. During 1981, one highly publicised exception involved the River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* at Roydon, Norfolk. During the few days of its stay, over 1,000 observers visited the site (which was on a public footpath), some of whom—in their efforts to see, film or photograph the bird, or trap it for ringing—trampled an area of rye, variously estimated between 200 and 400 square metres. Five nests of Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* in the hedge bordering the footpath were deserted. While it is important to view this damage in perspective (the value of the lost crop was less than £10, the trampled area constituted 0.2% of the field, and approximately a 15 times greater area had been lost to damage by rabbits), those who argue that it was tolerable considering the circumstances miss the point of the concern over this or similar 'minor' damage or misbehaviour. News of such happenings spreads quickly within the local community or more widely (through national press and television in this case), giving all birdwatchers a tarnished reputation and indirectly inhibiting public support for bird conservation efforts. Perhaps of more direct

concern to twitchers themselves should be the fact that such stories (regrettably sometimes in exaggerated form) quickly circulate among bird-watchers, making them understandably disinclined to divulge their own rarity finds for fear of similar incidents in their own regular birdwatching haunts.

We are grateful to Major W. P. Riley, on whose land the River Warbler occurred, for his understanding and constructive discussion of the situation. His main concern was that he was not informed of the bird's presence at the outset, or forewarned of the impending invasion of the area by birdwatchers. We are particularly persuaded to his view that a collection of money to compensate for cases of damage could be counter-productive, in that it may encourage an irresponsible approach by birdwatchers. In some cases, however, a collection may be appropriate when no damage or inconvenience has been caused, to provide a tangible form of gratitude for any special arrangements or considerations which have been made, or, especially, as an entrance fee to view a rarity on a reserve. If circumstances make viewing possible and allow for the necessary arrangements to be made, there is a fund-raising opportunity for the organisation running the reserve, which could be considerable if a major rarity is involved.

With hindsight, the problems at the River Warbler site could have been avoided, either by not spreading the news at all, or by making special prior arrangements with Major Riley. In the event (and it seemed a perfectly plausible plan at the time), it was decided to regulate the flow of observers by spreading the news slowly and selectively, but—perhaps inevitably—it eventually reached the national grapevine through the indiscretion of only one confidant. Clearly, this approach to spreading the news of a rarity in a sensitive site is risky, and is not recommended for similar situations in the future.

The welfare of the bird should always be the prime consideration of both finder and twitcher. It is sensible for a lone observer to attempt to obtain confirmation of his sighting by another, well-known and competent ornithologist. Drawing on the lessons learned at Roydon and at other rare bird sites, we have compiled the following guidelines concerning what to do when a rare bird is found, or when visiting the site.

Code for rarity-finders:

1. *The finder should feel no obligation to spread the news of a rarity, whatever the circumstances.*
2. *Even if inclined to tell others, the finder should first assess the likely number of interested observers, and consider whether the site can cope—without risk of trespass, disturbance or harm to bird, habitat or people's privacy—with such an influx.*
3. *The landowner, tenant farmer, local people or other birdwatchers should be consulted as appropriate. (An explanation of the situation will often prompt an interested and helpful reaction, and allay the understandable concern which may be caused by an unexplained invasion of the area. If highway obstruction is a potential problem, the police may welcome prior warning. On a reserve, the warden should always be among the first to be told.)*

4. *News should not be spread until appropriate arrangements have been made; these may include special wardening, roping-off the viewing site, posting of advisory or directional signs, and arrangements for car parking.*
5. *Once the decision has been made to spread the news, and preparations made, the message should contain clear instructions concerning how to reach the site and any special arrangements which have been made.*

Code for twitchers:

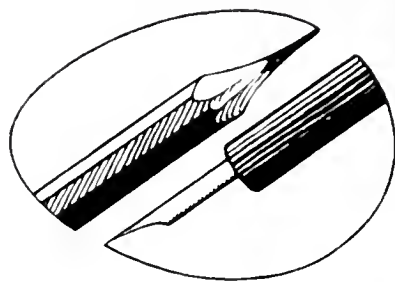
1. *If you are among the first to hear of a rare bird, satisfy yourself that the site can cope with the likely influx of observers before spreading the news.*
2. *Respect confidential information.*
3. *Especially if you have previous experience of visiting rare-bird sites, offer advice on any special arrangements which may need to be made, and offer on-site assistance if you are able.*
4. *Before setting out, ensure that you are fully informed concerning how to reach the site, and any special arrangements which have been made.*
5. *If you pass on the message, do so carefully and in full.*
6. *At the site, park sensibly and safely, follow any instructions responsibly, and always put the welfare of the bird first.*
7. *Never turn a blind eye to any misdemeanours committed by others.*
8. *Do not try to get closer than anyone else to view or—especially—to photograph the bird: let binoculars, telescopes and telephoto lenses cover the distance.*
9. *Be tactful, informative and friendly towards non-birdwatching onlookers or local people: they will probably be interested to know what is going on.*
10. *Be patient and restrained, especially if the bird moves suddenly to a new site nearby: give time for a new plan to be devised to cope with the situation.*
11. *Observe the Country Code at all times.*

We wish to thank the many people who have contributed advice and opinions, especially Bryan Bland, D. H. Dell, P. A. Dukes, S. J. M. Gantlett, W. G. Harvey, J. Kemp, J. Miller, R. F. Porter, P. Pratley, M. J. Rogers, Major W. P. Riley and N. Williams.

Seventy-five years ago...

[‘The plan of marking birds by an aluminium ring round the leg has often been tried, but never in a really systematic fashion. It would certainly teach us a great deal that cannot conceivably be learnt in any other way. To place rings on the legs of young birds just before they fledge would not be a great difficulty. We should like other readers’ opinions on this matter.—EDS.]’
(*Brit. Birds* 1: 58-59, July 1907)

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



In this, the fourth year of these awards, the two senior judges were pleased to be joined by Norman Arlott, winner of the previous two competitions, and to learn of his approach from the points of view both of competitor and of judge.

The winners were as follows:

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2nd Rodney Ingram (Ecton, Northamptonshire)

3rd Darren Rees (Andover, Hampshire)

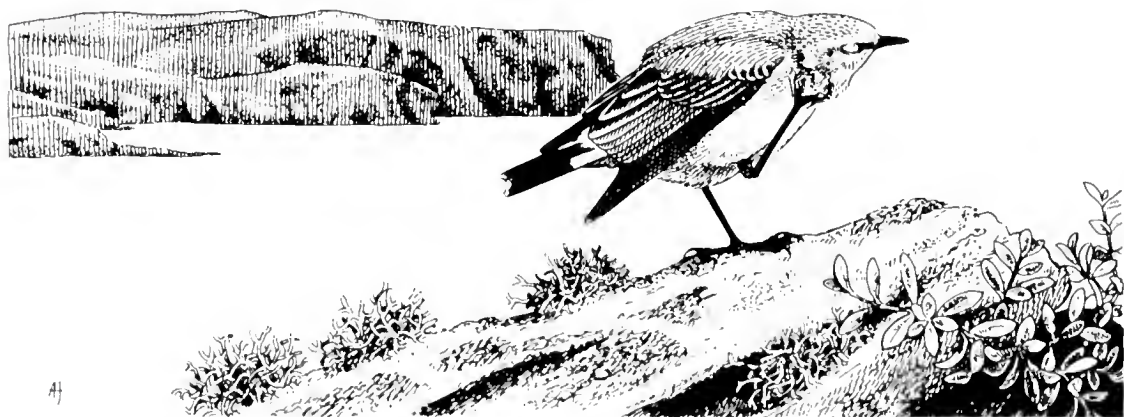
THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1982

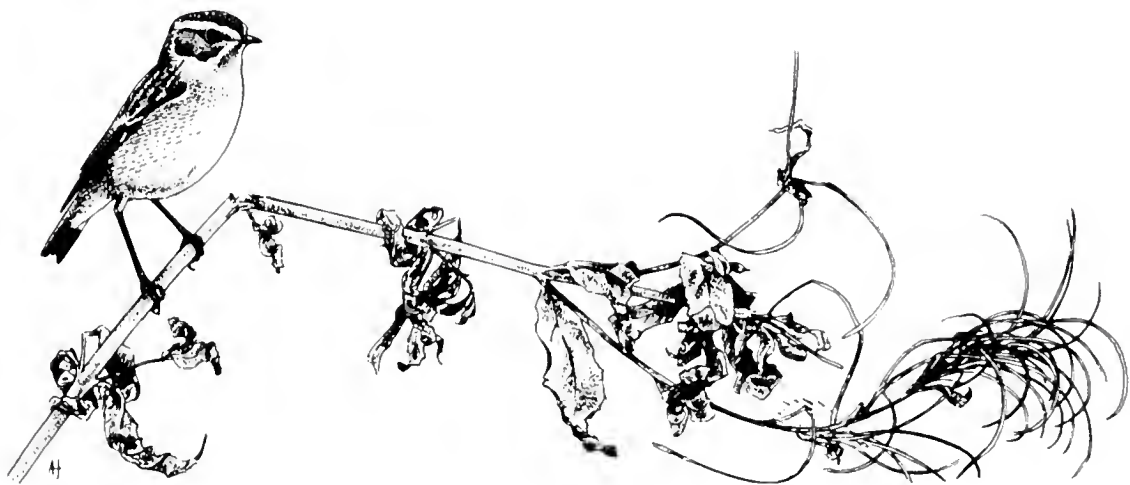
1st Keith Colcombe (Edmonton, London)

The number of entries was slightly higher than in the last two years, and we were encouraged to see how certain artists have been moving steadily up through the field. Outstanding was Alan Harris, who has now figured in the top three every year since 1979, and whom we unanimously and with no hesitation placed first this year. Settling the other placings took considerably longer. We had particularly noted Rodney Ingram's work in the earlier competitions, and this year he sent in a group of drawings which we eventually placed second, just above those by Darren Rees, who had won The Richard Richardson Award last year. A very close unofficial fourth placing was achieved by Dirk Moerbeek from the Netherlands.

The number of entries for The Richard Richardson Award was smaller than we would wish, and we appeal to readers to draw the attention of

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (Alan Harris)





Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (Alan Harris)

young artists, who may not see *BB*, to this competition, as we feel sure that there are talented young artists who may not yet know of the opportunities which the award represents. The winner, Keith Colcombe, submitted a set of four uniformly good drawings. We felt that Alasdair Peebles deserved mention as runner-up to this award, as he was one of the youngest entrants and shows promise with his vigorous scraperboard illustrations.



Siskin *Carduelis spinus* (Alan Harris)

The senior winner, Alan Harris, relates his birds to their perch or immediate surroundings in a most satisfactory way, the supporting plants being drawn to the correct scale and with as much care as is given to the birds themselves. His work shows a rich range of tone and texture and is achieved with a straightforward technique of fine pen drawing. We show three of his drawings here and the fourth on this month's cover and as the volume's frontispiece. Darren Rees, Dirk Moerbeek and Keith Colcombe also used pure pen-and-ink, whereas Rodney Ingram and many others worked in scraperboard to excellent effect. The two artist judges took

particular interest in the wide range of techniques and materials employed, including screened or textured scraperboards, rub-down tints and applied sheet tints, smooth drawing papers and rougher water colour boards. We make no recommendations as to the 'best' materials and techniques: there were excellent drawings done in all of them. What matters in this competition are illustrations that are appropriate for use on the cover or inside *BB* and techniques that are suitable, when reduced, for reproduction by lithography on the magazine's smooth paper. Sometimes, drawings were so fine that we knew that some lines would vanish or close up—or both—leaving a drawing, when reproduced, far from the delicately toned original.

Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala* (Rodney Ingram)





Alpine Swift *Apus melba* and Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* (Keith Colcombe)

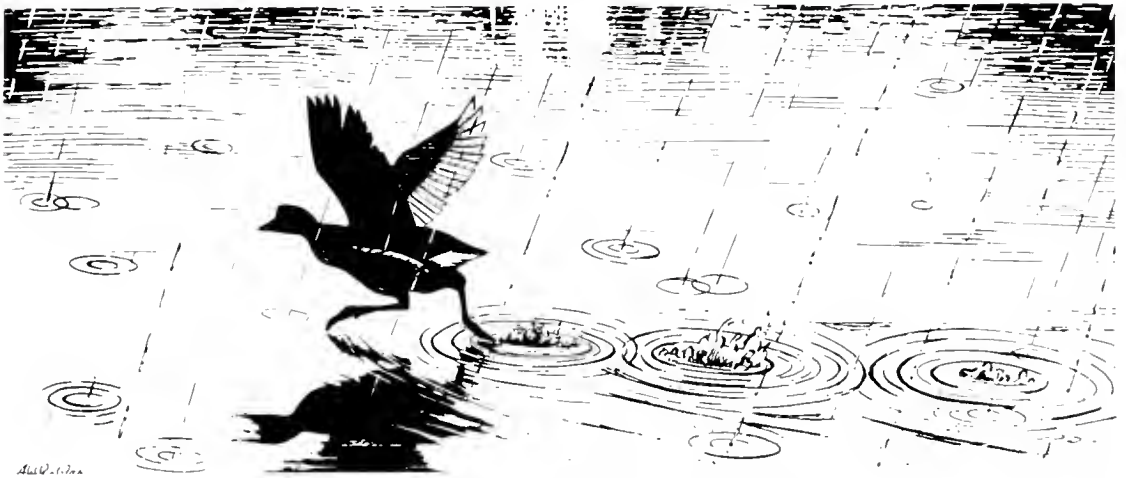
Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (Keith Colcombe)





Juvenile Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
(Darren Rees)

As to style, there was an equally wide range, from the most traditional bird illustration to highly stylised and decorative drawings, some of which were not really suitable for this magazine. We looked with enthusiasm, however, on original ideas and approaches to the problem of illustrating birds. Above all, what matters is that the bird is right and true to life in whatever way it is drawn. The simplest, boldest drawing can be 'right' and capture a bird's jizz, whereas another drawing that is highly and beautifully finished may, nevertheless, be hopelessly wrong, perhaps in the bird's proportions. It all boils down to having a feel for the character of the bird and then being able to put it on paper. A perfect technique is not so important as an understanding of the bird and what it is doing.



Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (Alasdair Peebles)

In the coming year, as in the past, nearly all the covers of *BB* will be selected from drawings submitted for these two competitions, and many of the smaller drawings will be used within the journal.

The entries of the four prizewinners will be on show at the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1, from 28th July to 16th August 1982.

ROBERT GILLMOR, NORMAN ARLOTT and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Influxes into Britain of Hen Harriers, Long-eared Owls and Short-eared Owls in winter 1978/79

D. L. Davenport



The winter of 1978/79 was the coldest in Britain since 1962/63, and produced outstanding numbers of several species, particularly water-birds (Chandler 1981). The influx of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* during the first quarter of 1979, however, was probably the most spectacular event of the winter. This paper documents this influx, together with those of Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus*, which also occurred in outstanding numbers. (In order to hasten writing and publication, the regions listed in the paper are generally those covered by the individual annual county reports and, therefore, do not necessarily correspond to the areas of the new counties of England, Scotland and Wales.)

Hen Harrier

In England, the main autumn arrivals of Hen Harriers occur in the southeast from mid October and continue throughout November. By the end of 1978, there were six roosts each of seven or eight individuals in East Anglia and Kent; although these were record numbers, they were by no means unexpected, as a continuing increase has taken place since 1974/75 (see below). The onset of the hard weather, in particular the blizzard of 30th-31st December, and the continuing snowfalls throughout January, produced an unprecedented midwinter influx of Hen Harriers along the length of the east and south coasts of England, especially between North Yorkshire and West Sussex, where numerous roosts were discovered. A much smaller, but equally unusual, midwinter influx of Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* also occurred on the east coast at this time. The extent of this influx of Hen Harriers is shown in table 1, which gives wintering totals for the principal (mainly coastal) counties and a summarised total for the remaining counties of England.

Table 1. Numbers and main roosts of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in England, January-March 1979

County areas are generally those covered by the annual county bird reports, and are listed in geographical order

County area	Total (main roosts)
Northumberland	15
Durham	6
Yorkshire (incl. north Humberside)	55 (5,7)
Lincolnshire (incl. south Humberside)	45 (4,5,7)
Cambridge	26 (7,14)
Huntingdon	13
Norfolk	90 (4,6,8,8,9,10,13)
Suffolk	95 (5,5,6,9,10,14,18,19)
Essex	50 (12)
Kent	105 (4,4,4,10,13,20,27)
East and West Sussex	60 (11)
Hampshire	40
Wiltshire	11
Dorset	30 (8)
Somerset	12
Devon	15
Cornwall	30 (5)
Other county areas	55

GRAND TOTAL 753

Elsewhere in Britain, there were no reports of unusual numbers of Hen Harriers. In Scotland, for instance, five wintering on the Insh Marshes, Inverness-shire, were described as normal, while three (the same number as in the previous winter) at Loch of Strathbeg, Aberdeen, included one wing-tagged in Orkney. Many wintering in the north of England (including an unprecedented three at Washington, Co. Durham, and an exceptional three at Leighton Moss, Lancashire) probably involved moorland harriers driven to coastal feeding grounds by the severe weather: on the Derbyshire moors, which normally support a winter roost of four to six, there were no records between 31st December and 7th April; although numbers on the

107. Male Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Netherlands, February 1976 (*Robin Williams*)





108. Female Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Hebrides, May 1976 (*Dennis Green*)

Yorkshire moorlands were considered to be above average, as were those elsewhere in Yorkshire and North Humberside.

The effects of the hard weather were immediate: by 4th January, there were already 14 roosting at Minsmere, Suffolk, and nearby at the Walberswick roost there was an early peak of 19 by 13th; a secondary roost between these two, at Dunwich, held a maximum of ten on 12th February. Elsewhere in East Anglia, the largest roosts were of 12 at Tollesbury, Essex, 13 at the main site (locality withheld) in Norfolk, 14 at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, and 18 at Oulton Broad, Suffolk. In Kent, the roost at Stodmarsh increased to 25 by 24th January, with further high counts of 25 on 3rd February, and 27 on 11th comprising seven adult males, three second-winter males, and 17 'ringtails' (females/immatures). A roost on the Thames marshes, at Egypt Bay, Kent, not discovered until 20th February, was frequented by 15-20 harriers until 19th March; there was evidently a large turnover at this site, which was used by at least 28 different individuals (five adult males, three second-winter males, and 20 ringtails). A further roost, at Walland Marsh, Kent, reached a late peak of 13 on 7th March (this site is of particular interest because, before the recent increase, it was the only documented English roost, having been used by four to six harriers during 1953-55). A few other roosts also had their highest numbers in March, presumably owing to returning spring migrants.

Information on age and sex was received for two-thirds of the national total of over 750 harriers. This showed that adult males, second-winter males and ringtails occurred in the ratio of 5:1:15, although it was apparent that many observers failed to distinguish second-winter males.

Long-eared Owl

As with the unprecedented influx of Long-eared Owls in 1975/76, the 1978/79 influx was heralded by an outstanding autumn passage, with



109. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Netherlands, April 1978 (*Frits Houtkamp*)

record numbers on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October. The main arrival was on 15th-16th: six on the Isle of May, Fife, and ten on Fair Isle, where up to seven remained until 19th. Fair Isle had another peak of four on 16th November. Farther south there were numerous coastal records of singles in October-November; only one, however, was recorded at Spurn, North Humberside (on 31st October), although up to eight roosted there during 5th-9th December.

By December, there were already 50 Long-eared Owls in Kent, half that county's eventual total. Information from other counties suggests that this gives a true indication of the comparative importance of the autumn migration and the subsequent hard weather: the combined effects of these two events produced a winter total second only to that of 1975/76.

The 1978/79 influx was confined mainly to Shetland and Orkney, and the east coast from Northumberland to Kent. Table 2 shows the winter

Table 2. Numbers and main roosts of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* wintering in Shetland, Orkney and England, 1978/79

County areas are generally those covered by the annual county bird reports, and are listed in geographical order

County area	Total (main roosts)
Shetland	45 (5,14,17)
Orkney	61 (6,6,20,24)
Northumberland	47 (10,21)
Durham	23 (13)
Yorkshire (incl. north Humberside)	40 (4,4,5,7,14)
Lincolnshire (incl. south Humberside)	41 (4,13,16)
Cambridge	15 (7)
Huntingdon	15
Norfolk	20 (7)
Suffolk	28 (4,5,9,10)
Essex	51 (5,6,6,14)
Kent	104 (4,5,5,5,7,8,18,32)
London	27 (4,4,6)
Lancashire	25 (5,6,12)
Other English Counties	62
GRAND TOTAL	604

totals for the counties involved, with the largest roosts in brackets, and a summarised total for all other English counties.

Short-eared Owl

As with the Long-eared, the winter influx of Short-eared Owls in 1978/79 started with an outstanding passage in October. Fair Isle had an early count of 15 on 1st, while on 12th seven arrived on the Skerries, Shetland, 14 on Fair Isle and 25 at the Forties oilfield (176km ENE of Aberdeen). An even larger arrival followed on 15th October: 30 on Fair Isle, nine on the Isle of May, and 32 along the Aberdeen coast, including 17 between Peterhead and Rattray Head. Although these movements were noted all down the east coast, there was no indication that numbers south of Northumberland were unusual; Spurn, for instance, recorded only up to four between 13th and 22nd October. In the southwest, on the other hand, Cornwall also recorded an unprecedented passage of 50 Short-eared Owls during October-November. During November-December, it finally became evident that virtually all parts of England, both coastal and inland, were affected by an exceptionally large and widespread influx of this species. The effects of the subsequent hard weather served only to augment numbers.

Table 3 shows the wintering totals for all English counties, with the largest concentrations in brackets. There was no indication of unusual numbers elsewhere (in Shetland, there were no records at all of Short-eared Owls in the first quarter of 1979).

Discussion

It is now evident, in retrospect, that numbers of Hen Harriers wintering in southeast England have increased steadily over the last 20 years. Recently, this increase has accelerated, and numbers have trebled between 1975 and 1980. In Kent, for instance, compared with a normal wintering population



110. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Netherlands, February 1976 (*Frits Houtkamp*)

of about 12 in the early 1970s, there were 18 in the winter of 1977/78 and 38 in 1979/80.

An interesting aspect of this sudden increase has been the inevitable discovery of numerous winter roosts. In Norfolk, the main roost has held four or more harriers since as long ago as 1968/69, and another roost of five was found in 1974/75; in 1975/76, one of six was present in Breckland, an area where no significant roosts were reported in 1978/79. In other counties, the first roosts of four or more were reported in Lincolnshire in the 1974/75 winter, in Kent (apart from 1953-55, see above) and in Yorkshire in 1976/77, and in Suffolk and in Cambridgeshire in 1977/78, although such gatherings could not be considered widespread until the hard winter of 1978/79, when there were 33 major roosts totalling 311 harriers along the south and east coasts of England. The counties of Kent and Suffolk have since held five regular roosts apiece, each totalling 30 individuals, while Norfolk had seven totalling 44 in 1979/80.

The parallel increase of the much scarcer Rough-legged Buzzard in winter on the east coast of England has to some extent been concealed by its large autumn irruptions, the most recent in 1966, 1973 and 1974 (Scott 1968, 1978).

Numbers of Long-eared Owls wintering on the east coast of England have also increased significantly in recent years: in Kent, following the

Table 3. Numbers and main roosts of Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* wintering in England, 1978/79

Areas are listed alphabetically and, apart from the four West Midland counties, are generally those covered by the annual bird reports

Area	Total (main roosts)	Area	Total (main roosts)
Avon	7	Lincolnshire (incl. south Humberside)	90
Bedfordshire	26	London	90
Berkshire	15	Norfolk	50 (8,10)
Buckinghamshire	18	Northants	50 (11)
Cambridge	60 (10,10,12,20)	Northumberland	60 (9)
Cheshire	40 (20)	Nottinghamshire	55 (9)
Cornwall	37 (16)	Oxfordshire	55 (20)
Cumbria	19 (8)	Shropshire	10
Derbyshire	53 (11)	Somerset	42 (12)
Devon	44 (8,12)	Staffordshire	15
Dorset	30	Suffolk	40 (9,20)
Durham	90 (8,10,20,20)	Surrey	25 (12)
Essex	90 (8,8,9,14)	Sussex (East & West)	30
Gloucester	15	Warwickshire	25
Hampshire	30	West Midlands	10
Herefordshire	10	Wiltshire	28
Hertfordshire	9 (9)	Worcestershire	6
Huntingdon	43	Yorkshire (incl. north Humberside)	70 (8,10)
Kent	90 (8,8,12)		
Lancashire	41 (9,9,12)		
Leicestershire	31 (8)		
GRAND TOTAL		1,549	

record total of 170 in 1976, there were 72 in 1977 and 54 in 1978, numbers which in any other context would have been considered exceptional, while in early 1979 there was a total of 104. Most of the Kentish roosts are situated in, or adjacent to, large roosts of finches (*Fringillidae*) and sparrows *Passer*, although the owls' main food apparently consists of voles (*Microtinae*). It is interesting to note that the Long-eared Owl is now occurring in a pattern similar to that of the Rough-legged Buzzard: occasional large autumn influxes, as in 1975 and 1978, set against a background of a sustained increase. It may well be that the failure of the Hen Harrier to occur in large autumn irruptions has kept this interesting species out of the limelight, and certainly its increase as a winter visitor is difficult to monitor, until the population builds up to such a level that the main roosts are unavoidably discovered.

The immediate origin of Hen Harriers wintering in southeast England is presumed to be the Netherlands, where breeding numbers have greatly increased in recent years: from 15-20 pairs in 1964, and 35-45 pairs in 1970, to 100-135 pairs in 1977 (Schipper 1979). There has also been a much larger increase in the wintering population there, which cannot be explained entirely by the breeding numbers (G. J. Oreel *in litt.*). Of particular interest are reports of a strong southerly movement of Hen Harriers in the Netherlands during the first week of January 1979, including seven to 11 per hour at three coastal sites on 4th (*Verslag van de Club van Zeetrekwaarnemers* 16: 24).

There was another large influx of Hen Harriers into southeast England in the severe winter of 1981/82. In Kent, where the five main roosts each held

nine to 14 birds, the figures suggest a population as high as 70% of that of the 1978/79 influx.

Acknowledgments

The original data for this paper were collected by I. Dawson and J. N. Hollyer, after requests for information were made nationally, while much additional material has been taken from the published county reports. The following county recorders and individual observers supplied information necessary for the compilation of the tables, or sent details on individual Hen Harrier roosts: J. S. Armitage, K. Atkin, D. J. Barker, R. Berry, B. Bishop, M. Blackburn, Dr W. R. P. Bourne, P. Clarke, B. Cobbold, C. J. Coe, J. Cudworth, C. Davies, N. Davies, M. K. Dennis, A. Dobbs, D. A. Dorling, G. Ekins, M. Everett, R. Forrester, R. Frost, B. Galloway, A. Grieve, E. Griffiths, J. P. Guest, G. R. Harrison, W. G. Harvey, R. Heath, P. Hopkin, J. Howard, I. W. Jennings, R. Key, B. King, C. A. E. Kirtland, R. Leavett, S. E. Linsell, J. A. McGeoch, G. E. Manser, J. R. Mather, D. R. Moore, P. J. Mountford, P. J. Oliver, A. Paine, B. P. Pickess, A. Pickup, J. Sanders, M. J. Seago, S. Shepherd, N. Sills, F. Solly, M. Stott, M. J. Tickner, R. Turner, B. Unwin, J. Wheatley, J. Wilson.

Summary

An unprecedented midwinter influx of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* took place on the south and east coasts of England in the severe weather of January 1979. This influx is presumed to have come from the Netherlands. Over 750 individuals were wintering in England during the first quarter of 1979; these included 33 roosts totalling 311 harriers, with the largest roost containing a maximum of 27. The age:sex ratios, where given, comprised 5 adult males: 1 second-winter male: 15 females/immatures. This influx occurred during a period of continuing increase in the wintering population of Hen Harriers in southeast England, where numbers have trebled during 1975-80. The habit of forming regular winter roosts, virtually unrecorded in England before 1974/75, has now become a common feature of this species' behaviour.

Numbers of Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus* were also exceptional in 1978/79. About half the Long-eared and probably a much higher proportion of the Short-eared, arrived during an exceptional autumn passage in the last quarter of 1978, while the severe weather of January 1979 produced a fresh influx to augment these numbers. The total of Long-eared Owls was second only to the unprecedented influx during the autumn and winter of 1975/76.

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Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

2. The bird book that we need

'The market for general field guides covering hundreds of species, from divers to sparrows, has surely now been met in Europe . . .' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 410). In the decade that has followed, the appearance of half-a-dozen such

books has proved the market to be considerably more elastic than anticipated, even if it has sometimes seemed that 'there is a conspiracy amongst publishers to make every bird book slightly inadequate so that we need to buy all of them' (*Birds* 8 (3): 51).

The problem is that the popular publishing market has become mesmerised by the field-guide formula. Hence the unfortunate spectacle of three less-than-complete field guides to African birds south of the Sahara where a more imaginative approach could have produced a more comprehensive and satisfying coverage. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the exhaustive multi-volume approach which, as exemplified by the elephantine *BWP*, promises to strain both bookshelves and bank balances in equal measure. The middle ground is left to the admirable *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*, which, however, suffers from its limited geographical scope, its elderly (and third-hand!) illustrations, and a total lack of maps. Since that book's inception, there has been a positive avalanche of ornithological information which can be tapped only by the purchase of several (often expensive) volumes, and subscriptions to various journals.

Rather than more field guides, surely what is required is a single volume on European birds which is neither prohibitively expensive nor disappointingly shallow. (Zoogeographical purists might consider the western Palearctic to be the proper unit, despite the danger of running to a cumbersome double volume.) As most birdwatchers now operate from the comfort of a motor car, weight need not be a paramount consideration. Most of us would find it useful to have an authoritative reference whilst on holiday, without recourse to an extra rucksack or suitcase to accommodate a small library. Something the size of the 19th century Saunders' *Manual of British Birds* (i.e. 800+ pages), with illustrations à la Hayman or Jonsson, employing the ingenious year-cycle charts from the late James Fisher's *Bird Recognition* to condense information, with identification notes from D. I. M. Wallace's astute pen, and maps under the expert direction of J. L. F. Parslow or Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, would seem to be what is called for. Or am I alone on my soap-box?

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Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. It is, however, our aim to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers.

EDS

Vivitar TLA-1 Telescopic Lens Adaptor

This useful accessory enables photographic lenses to be used as telescopes. It is quite small (47.5 mm long by 64 mm diameter), weighs a mere 83 g, and attaches in the usual manner to the lens. The adaptor is available in fittings for attachment to interchangeable lenses of most makes of 35-mm camera. It has a rubber fold-down eye-cup that will suit spectacle wearers, and is

supplied in a small case. A drawback is that when the adaptor is fitted there is no catch to lock it firmly in place on the lens; this gives an impression of insecurity, though this is probably more imagined than real.

Construction is of three coated elements, with a roof prism, so that the image is seen correctly orientated and not inverted. The magnification obtained is one-tenth of the focal length (in mm) of the lens that is used. The adaptor has been tried with a series of good quality 35-mm camera telephoto lenses of fixed focal length of 135mm to 1000mm, giving a range of magnification of 13.5× to 100×.

In use in the field, the same problems arise as with conventional telescopes. At low magnifications, the lens/adaptor combination can be hand held; the 135-mm lens worked well in this way. With a 300-mm lens (30× magnification), shake was a problem, and it was impossible to use the adaptor conveniently with a lens that could not be tripod mounted. In direct comparison in the field with a conventional 25-60 × 60 zoom telescope, the adaptor performed well optically. The field of view was very similar (perhaps marginally less), and sharpness appeared only slightly inferior at low magnifications, improving in comparison with the telescope at higher magnifications. No colour fringes were apparent. The main drawback was the limited depth of focus compared with the telescope, especially using the longer focal length lenses. In addition, the very restricted field of view with long focal length lenses made it difficult to locate the subject of interest, something that is not a problem with the zoom telescope at high power as the subject can be located at low magnification when the field of view is wider. The adaptor could also be used with zoom photographic lenses, though these were not used by the reviewer.

Photographers who have a 200-mm to 300-mm (or even 500-mm) telephoto lens with a tripod mount (and a tripod!) who would like a telescope, but who do not expect to use it very often, will find this compact accessory useful and considerably cheaper than a telescope (usually around £25).

R. J. CHANDLER

Mystery photographs

67 Last month's problem bird (plate 102, repeated here) was obviously a warbler, and the squarish tail, relatively weak bill and general appearance quickly eliminate other genera and identify it as a *Phylloscopus*.

The elongated shape (in no way recalling





111. Mystery photograph 68. Identify the species. Answer next month

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*) and absence of any wing-bar immediately eliminates all thoughts of Pallas's *P. proregulus*, Yellow-browed *P. inornatus* or Plain Willow Warblers *P. neglectus*. Although they usually exhibit at least one, Green *P. nitidus*, Greenish *P. trochiloides* and Arctic Warblers *P. borealis* may, through wear, lose the pale tips which create a wing-bar. This bird, however, has absolutely no trace of a wing-bar. Although there is quite a long, pale supercilium, it is not clearly defined and, in particular, is not bordered at the top by any darkening of the sides of the crown, a feature shown particularly by Arctic and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*; the rather thin, pointed bill also does not fit Radde's. The underparts are apparently uniform, without any clear division (between yellow and white) as would be shown by Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*. Although the bill size and shape, and the pale crescent under the eye, both accord with Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*, the supercilium is perhaps not quite prominent enough for that species, and, even more important, the wings are too long (extending beyond the uppertail-coverts) and the tail seems to be square-ended or even notched, whereas the tail of Dusky is slightly rounded.

An experienced observer would, in the field, have dismissed these nine species in a single glance. The real identification problem is to decide between the remaining west Palearctic species: Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli*, Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*, Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and Willow Warbler *P. trochilus*.

Although one has to peer closely to see it in this photograph, the primaries not only extend well beyond the uppertail-coverts but also project noticeably beyond the secondaries. Thus, we have a 'pointed-winged' rather than a 'rounded-winged' species. The legs are rather thick and pale, not spindly and black. Despite the pale feathering below the eye (a good character of Chiffchaff as well as of Dusky Warbler), the bird is clearly neither Chiffchaff nor Mountain Chiffchaff, both of which are rounded-winged with, almost invariably, dark if not black legs. Some Chiffchaffs, but almost no Willow Warblers, have pale edges to the inner primaries, secondaries and tertials, forming a panel which contrasts with

the uniform wing-coverts. This, shown clearly by our bird, is typical of Bonelli's Warbler. Perhaps the two best characters of Bonelli's, however, are a big-headed or front-heavy appearance (comparable with Willow Tit *Parus montanus*) and an absence of all but a trace of an eye-stripe, isolating the large, dark eye within the large, pale head. These structural and plumage features are both clearly shown by the mystery bird; an adult Bonelli's Warbler photographed in Portugal in June 1980 by Dr K. J. Carlson.

This species was featured earlier in this series (*Brit. Birds* 70: 259, 296-297), when P. J. Grant covered its identification in great detail. JTRS

Bird-photographers

22 Michael W. Richards

Mike Richards was the fourth in line of *BB*'s Photographic Editors, holding the position from 1977 to 1980, the first being G. K. Yeates, who was appointed to look after our photographic interests as long ago as 1952. If you ask for a thumbnail sketch of Mike from anyone who knows him, all, without exception, will grin and not infrequently laugh. This response, however, is not malicious, for one feeling that Mike engenders in everyone is affection. What is it that triggers this response? One answer is his constant, disarming grin; more than that, he may at times appear downright eccentric. There is, for instance, a famous photograph (in his own book on bird-photography, no less!) of him wearing a long trench-coat, wellington boots, dark gloves and a balaclava helmet, aimed—or so he says—to make him appear 'less obtrusive'! It may work with birds, but it has the opposite effect on human beings.

Mike's main interests, in natural history (particularly ornithology) and photography, both date from his school days, so it is not surprising that he decided to combine the two. The various art schools to which he applied pointed out, however, that a career in natural history photography was not the most commercial proposition, and that he would be unwise to narrow his field too early. Despite these dire warnings, Mike took a full-time three-year course in photography at Guildford Art School (now the West Surrey College of Art and Design), during which time he gained experience in most forms of commercial photography and also in basic filming techniques. He found particularly invaluable the experience of large-format cameras, which he feels hold a great potential for bird-photography.

At about that time, quite fortuitously, he met Frank Blackburn, who lived only a few miles away, and Mike benefited greatly from his help and encouragement, on occasion working from Frank's hides. Mike left college jobless, ending up working with a high-street photographer with whom

photographing furniture presented a new challenge: composition could be considered at length without any fear of the subject flying away! After a few months, a vacancy occurred at the RSPB for a photographic librarian, a job Mike got, starting in April 1975. From running this in-house service department, mainly in black-and-white photographs, Mike progressed to stills photographer, taking advantage of the RSPB Film Unit productions to expand the library in both black-and-white and colour.

In April 1980, Mike had the chance to become a cameraman with the RSPB Film Unit, an appointment that forced him to relinquish his connections with *BB*. To those familiar with his still photography, it was no surprise when he won awards both in the United States and here in Britain

112. Michael W. Richards (*Frank V. Blackburn*)











113. Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Surrey, November 1974 (Michael W. Richards)

114. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* at nest, Surrey, July 1973 (Michael W. Richards)

115. Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Cambridgeshire, December 1979 (Michael W. Richards)

116. Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Cambridgeshire, December 1979 (Michael W. Richards)

117. Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Bedfordshire, August 1977 (Michael W. Richards)

118. Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* at nest, Bedfordshire, May 1977 (Michael W. Richards)

119. Barn Owl *Tyto alba* dead on road, Bedfordshire, January 1977 (Michael W. Richards)

with his first film. Now, he is in his third season of carrying around what he refers to as 'this unspeakably heavy equipment'. Many will be interested (and disappointed) to hear that Mike finds it impossible to combine still photography of birds with his filming. Nevertheless, he maintains his membership of the Zoological Photographic Club and finds that he has a more than adequate file of high quality photographs to continue to enable him to insert prints in the club's postal portfolio.

Mike has produced some superb results with 35-mm equipment, particularly when working from his own hide with a 400-mm telephoto lens. His preference, however, when the occasion allows, is to work with medium-format cameras (he uses a *Bronica*, with which all the accompanying photographs were taken), finding that, with the resulting relatively large negatives, he achieves the high quality results to which he aspires. In this way, he has obtained several fine series of photographs of various waterbirds.

Readers of *Birds* will remember with pleasure some wonderful wintry shots of Kingfisher and Water Rails, and a delightful series of nesting Little Grebes at various stages of their breeding cycle. We have selected three evocative black-and-white versions of these subjects, both the Kingfisher (plate 115) and the Water Rail (plate 116) being the results of bitterly cold but well worthwhile waits in a small hide. Conditions were less rigorous when he photographed the Little Grebe (plate 114). His Wren (plate 113) captures well the character of this tiny bird. Sadly, Barn Owls are not infrequent victims of road accidents, and the carefully composed photograph (plate 119) was taken to make a poster for the RSPB. The remaining two photographs are of birds at or near the nest. The fine study of the Swallow (plate 117) is surely one of the best taken of this species; here, careful use of 'fill-in' flash has transformed what would otherwise have been a mere silhouette. The other is of a common enough subject for bird-photographers—a nesting Song Thrush—but Mike has achieved a classic portrait (plate 118).

DON SMITH and R. J. CHANDLER

Notes

Great White Egrets with red legs and black bills On 25th October 1981, J. Mikuska, A. Dijkzen, J. Kuypers and I observed a flock of 110 Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* on a fishpond near the Kopacki-Rit in Yugoslavia. Among these herons, JM discovered two Great White Egrets with completely red legs and feet, and black bills. The leg colour was strikingly bright and made us think of the leg colour of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*. We could not discover other differences. When we found the birds, they were close together in the flock, but while feeding they separated. We saw one of them the next day. Normally, non-breeding or immature Great White Egrets have yellow bills and black legs and feet; apparently all-black bills occur. In the breeding season, the underside of the thigh becomes yellow and, rarely, for a short time, red. I have been unable to find any indication in the literature that completely red legs and feet have been observed before.

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Identification of female, eclipse male and first-winter male Ring-necked Ducks The first 19 records of Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in Britain and Ireland, up to the end of 1975, included only two females, both in 1974. Since then, there has been a huge upsurge in records, with some 103 recorded in the five years 1976-80, but only about one-quarter have referred to females or immatures. These plumages may be overlooked, and it is possible that the preponderance of male Ring-necked Ducks in late winter and spring may be due in part to the fact that first-winter males do not attain their distinctive plumage until December or January. In recent years, a number of Ring-necked Ducks seen in Avon and Somerset have not been in conventional, 'text-book' plumages. As some have stayed for weeks or even months, it has been possible to make a protracted study of the plumage changes of known individuals. This note describes female summer, eclipse male and first-winter male as well as a presumed Ring-necked \times Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* hybrid.

Female summer In 1980, a female appeared at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, on 15th June, moving in mid August to Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, where she was last seen on 13th October. On 3rd August, she was joined by a second female, which remained until 21st September (fig. 1a). This latter bird bore a yellowish colour ring and so is considered to have been an escape. Both were unusual in that they showed only a very faint narrow whitish bill band behind the black tip. The band was very difficult to see at a range of 200m through a telescope, the bill usually appearing dark grey with a black tip. B. Rabbitts (*in litt.*) thought that the band of the first female was becoming slightly more conspicuous when he last saw her on 13th October, while, by 14th September, the band of the second individual was developing quite strongly, being fairly thin but quite noticeable at ranges of 100-200m. Both were drab in appearance; in fact the second individual resembled the juvenile illustrated in plate 77 of *BWP* (vol. 1). By 24th August, however, she had moulted her remiges and was flightless, proving that she was at least one year old. Both possessed a conspicuous whitish eye-ring, but lacked the 'tear-line' running back behind the eye. The first female had conspicuous pale buffy lores, merging with a pale

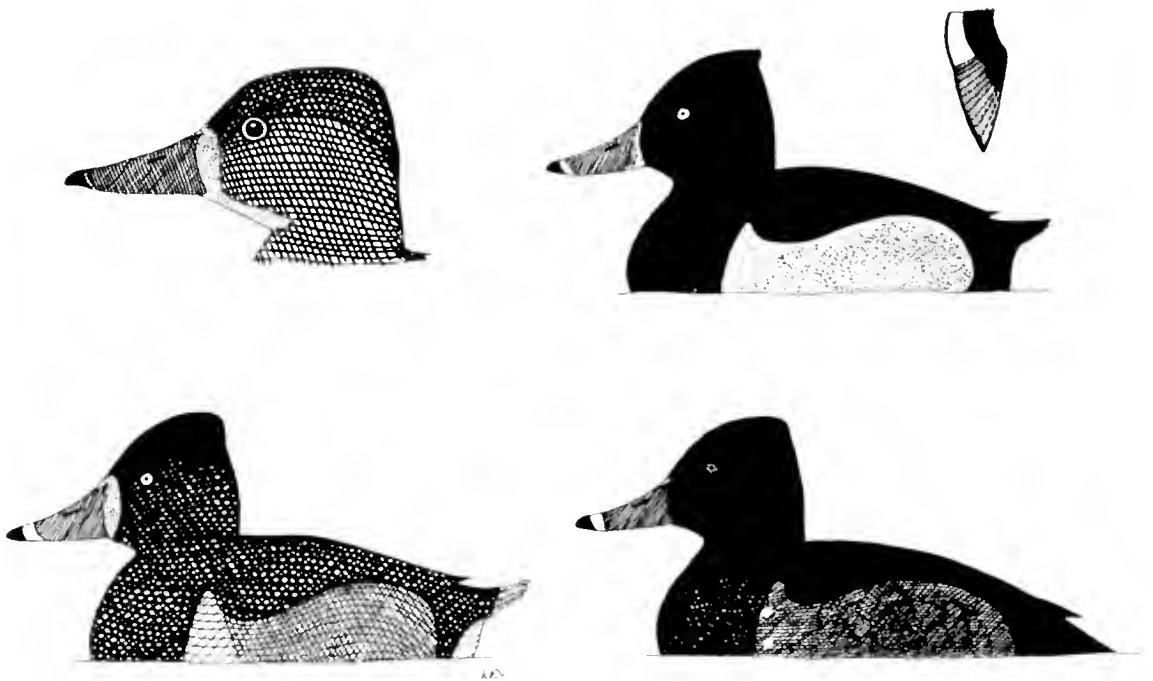


Fig. 1. Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*: (a) top left, head of adult female summer, Avon, 9th August 1980; (b) bottom left, adult male eclipse, Avon, 16th August 1972; (c) bottom right, first-winter male, Somerset, 23rd November 1980; (d) top right, presumed Ring-necked \times Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* hybrid, Avon, 29th December 1976 (and open wing) (Keith Vincombe)

forehead and a pale buff chin and throat. The second was noticeably duller, though the lores and throat gradually became whiter after mid August.

On 2nd September, two female Ring-necked Ducks in the Wildfowl Trust collection at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, appeared practically identical to the Chew birds, showing only a vague hint of a 'tear-line' and only a very narrow bill band, difficult to see even at 5m. Both showed conspicuously pale lores. By 16th November, two Slimbridge females had prominent white bill bands, but much narrower, less pure white and fainter towards the sides of the bill than those of adult males. Their 'tear-lines' had not changed.

It appears, therefore, that at least some female Ring-necked Ducks practically lose the white bill band in summer, while the 'tear-line' does not appear to be a regular feature, at least in summer and early winter.

Eclipse male In 1972, a male Ring-necked Duck summered at Blagdon Lake, Avon. On 30th June, he was still in full plumage, but his white bill band had faded slightly and the white at the base was indistinct. By 6th July, his flanks had become patchy and the white 'spur' at the front had almost vanished, as had the white base of the bill. On 16th and 23rd August, he was in full eclipse (fig. 1b): head, breast and upperparts blackish-brown, blackest on crown; noticeable whitish area on lores, connected by thin white line over bill; flanks brown, tinged rufous, with diffuse triangular whitish area replacing spur; conspicuous whitish undertail-coverts; bill band still noticeably white, but faded; no eye-ring. The Ring-necked was not obvious among the thousand or so Tufted Ducks and Pochards *A. jerina* with which he associated, the best locational features being his distinctive shape, whitish bill band and lores, and full, stuck-out, pale brown tail. By 24th September, at Cheddar Reservoir, he was advancing into full plumage: bill band brighter; narrow white line over top of bill, but whitish lores lost; head, breast and upperparts black, but flanks still rufousy-brown, paler towards front; undertail-coverts mainly dark, while tail in heavy moult and shorter than usual.

First-winter male Two first-winter male Ring-necked Ducks were studied at Orchardleigh Lake, Somerset, on 23rd November 1980 (fig. 1c). They were quite difficult to separate from Tufted Ducks when asleep, but more rounded flank shape and lack of tuft proved best locational features. Their heads were less peaked than that of adult male, with flatter crown more similar to female; upperparts black, but breast mainly dark brown; flanks mainly brown, slightly mottled grey due to appearance of new feathering; no white spur, but one or two white feathers just appearing; faint pale feathering on undertail-coverts; conspicuous white bill band easily best feature, though not as broad as that of adult male; narrow white line across top of base of bill; yellowy eye very dull compared with adult male's.

On 29th December 1976, a first-winter male at Chew was very similar to two accompanying adult males except that his flanks were duller and less 'smooth', white 'spur' slightly less well defined, and bill pattern duller, with narrower white bands. By January 1977, he was very difficult to separate from the adults. Similarly, the Orchardleigh males had attained adult plumage by 1st February 1981 except for a few dark feathers remaining on sides, brown scalloping on lower breast, and slightly duller bill bands.

Presumed Ring-necked × Tufted Duck hybrid A presumed hybrid was present at Chew and Blagdon from 19th December 1976 to early April 1977. It possessed very definite features of both species, leaving its identity in little doubt (fig. 1d). Size, shape and structure were similar to Ring-necked Duck, but peaked crown had short, distinct tuft; bill between Ring-necked and Tufted in shape, and slightly darker grey than male Tufted, while bill band more conspicuous than male Tufted, but less obvious than first-winter male Ring-necked; ghost of white line across top of base of bill, and sides of base also slightly paler; flanks distinctly rounded in shape and uniformly pale grey, perceptibly paler towards front; wing-stripe midway between two species: secondaries white, but primaries grey. There seemed little possibility of confusing it with other hybrids (e.g. Tufted × Pochard types) or with the occasional aberrant Tufted Duck.

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Hen Harriers stooping at birds in winter Although stooping as a hunting method by Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* may be no commoner than suggested (*Brit. Birds* 72: 288-289), I have seen similar techniques used by

the species in winter on three occasions in Galloway. On 11th December 1976, a 'ringtail' (female or immature) reached a height of about 20m, then, at some distant trees, suddenly closed its wings and dived straight down, like a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, after an unidentified small bird and out of sight. On 1st October 1978, a juvenile male circled at about 30m, suddenly closed its wings, and dived down towards the moor as about 100 Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* flew up; it beat across the moor, turned, twisted in flight after the larks, dived headfirst into the heather *Calluna* and remained there. On 27th January 1979, I was watching four harriers hunting finches *Carduelis* over some arable fields when a ringtail rose to 30m, half-closed its wings and stooped on the finch flock, but missed.

Hen Harriers also sometimes use this technique to harass other raptors or to flush birds from ground cover. On 26th November 1978, a Peregrine and a ringtail were over a known harrier breeding area; the harrier circled higher and then began repeatedly stooping towards the ground, whereupon the falcon rose from below it and flew away. On 16th December 1978, a ringtail was circling about 25m over a low-lying moor; it suddenly closed its wings and stooped at a juvenile Peregrine, uttering a sharp chatter; there was a sharp exchange as each stooped and dived on the other. On 18th January 1978, a juvenile male Hen Harrier was hunting over moorland when it stooped above some heather; two Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* were flushed and flew away (see also *Brit. Birds* 57: 4; 65: 16). R. C. DICKSON

Seabhag, Stoneykirk, Dumfries & Galloway

On 13th January 1979, at Hatfield Moors, South Yorkshire, a female or immature Hen Harrier, hunting a stubble field, flushed a small bird, which immediately rose rapidly into the air. The harrier pursued and caught it up, by when both were about 17m above the ground; it then attempted to catch the bird in the air, twisting and turning like a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. Very soon the bird suddenly dropped rapidly towards a small, solitary hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*; the harrier immediately folded its wings and stooped almost vertically. The small bird reached the bush a fraction before the harrier, which was forced to veer up sharply within a metre of the bush. The raptor then circled around the bush, close in, for about one minute before resuming hunting a nearby field.

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The Hen Harrier is noted by *BWP* as being 'probably the most dexterous of west Palearctic *Circus*', but stooping is not specifically mentioned. The habit appears to be regular. EDS

Bowing behaviour of Hen Harriers According to Brown & Amadon (1968), several species of raptor indulge in 'specialised greeting ceremonies which include bowing apparently in greeting'. The nearest corresponding behaviour documented for Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* is Delamain's (1932) brief description, cited by Watson (1977). Bowing is, however, recorded for the Nearctic subspecies, *C. c. hudsonius*, for Bent (1937) stated that 'on the ground the male bows to the female and swells with amorous 'ordor [=

ardour].’ In 1978 and 1979, I noted bowing behaviour several times in Galloway. On 28th April 1978, a male landed in a patch of heather, but was displaced by the female; he landed below with his tail fanned; the female remained for three minutes before displacing him again; he landed, with his back to her and his tail fanned, and bowed continuously; he flew up, landed, with his back to his mate and his tail fanned, and bowed again three or four times. On 7th May, a female flew up from a fence post to meet a male and both circled; the female landed at the nest, then flew up, displacing the male from his perch, and both landed close together; the female bent forward (‘bowing’); the male flew up as if to mount, but turned away and landed. On 9th May, a male of a non-breeding pair bowed six times to a soaring female, who flew down, forced the male from his perch and bent forward. On 29th May 1978, a male bowed three or four times to a female, and later two or three times, the second occasion being followed by copulation. On 4th May 1979, a male circled a female as if to mount her, but landed; he bowed twice, with his back to her and his tail fanned, flew a short distance, and bowed twice again in the same manner; he flew up, tail fanned, again as if to mount, but landed above. On 15th May, a male delivered prey to his incubating mate; the two circled each other, tails fanned, and landed close together; the male bowed 20 times, his back to the female, and flew to the nest with his tail fanned. No systematic study was made of this behaviour, but, on summarising the six records (from four breeding areas), males were seen bowing eight times and females twice (once doubtful). On six occasions the male had his back to the female, probably showing his white rump; only twice did he face her. Delamain (1932) stated that ‘he repeatedly lowers his empty beak towards his talons... then standing erect again, exhibits his white breast.’ The male bowed to the female once before copulation and twice before attempted copulation. R. C. DICKSON

Seabhag, Stoneykirk, Dumfries & Galloway

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Mobbing: Goshawk attacking stuffed Eagle Owl An explanation commonly given (e.g. Galloway 1972) for the communal mobbing behaviour of birds is that it is a kind of predator recognition: it serves to draw the attention of birds in the neighbourhood to the presence of the predator, enables inexperienced young birds to learn to recognise an enemy, and may also even succeed in driving the predator away. Another hypothesis (e.g. Bourne 1977) is that mobbing with the use of a special flight pattern and classical hue and cry serves to attract the attention of other bird species which, in their turn, may be capable of driving the enemy away or at least of reducing its eagerness to catch prey. In 1977-79, near Trondheim, Norway, I made some field observations which help to throw some light on the latter hypothesis. Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* (in this instance of the ‘hooded’ race *cornix*) readily mob Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo*.



120. Juvenile Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (probably female) eating dead Carrion Crow *Corvus corone cornix*, Heimdal, Trondheim, Norway, March 1979. Crow had been tied to branch the night before. Goshawk probably same as one that attacked stuffed owl (see text) (Jon Arne Saeter)

When shooting crows for ecological studies, therefore, I frequently used a stuffed Eagle Owl, or a plastic imitation, as a decoy. Most shooting was in winter, both on the edge of a forest surrounded by farmland (at Bratsberg) and at a refuse tip (at Heimdal). I used a hide, made of snow and branches of Norway spruce *Picea abies*, which I entered before crow activity began in the morning. The owl was set upright, with its wings pressed close against its sides, 1½ m above ground on the top of a bush about 15 m from the hide; sometimes the skin of a dead crow was placed alongside, sometimes a stuffed crow was also placed about 4 m away. The crows were shot with a rifle with silencer while they perched in the spruce trees nearby. Soon after they discovered the owl's presence, the crows gathered in large numbers to mob it. On at least seven occasions, one or more Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* appeared, probably attracted by the crowding together and loud 'cawing'

of the crows; these instances are set out below:

18th January 1977, Heimdal (stuffed owl with crow skin at its feet and stuffed crow nearby on snow). Crows still mobbing the owl, and four had been shot, when a Goshawk flew off with the stuffed crow.

1st February 1977, Bratsberg (plastic owl). After two hours, crows began to mob the owl, whereupon an adult Goshawk appeared and perched 25m from the owl, for about five minutes.

28th March 1978, Heimdal (stuffed owl with crow skin at its feet and stuffed crow placed in nearby bush). Several crows had already been shot, when a Goshawk suddenly flew off with the stuffed one. Soon afterwards a Goshawk, probably the same, came and took a shot crow which was lying on the ground nearby; it then sat, about 10m from the owl, under a spruce tree, plucked the crow and probably started to eat it (I later found feathers on the ground).

3rd November 1978, Heimdal (stuffed owl). The crows mobbed the owl, and three were shot. An adult Goshawk then attacked a crow perched in a free-standing willow *Salix* about 40m from the owl, but was unsuccessful; the crow had probably been watching the owl, when the hawk attacked from behind. The hawk then flew to a spruce 10m from the owl, and I shot a crow on the top of the neighbouring tree; as the crow fell obliquely, the hawk flew, caught it in mid-air, and flew off with it, all in a single run. Five minutes later, a juvenile Goshawk appeared; the crows had continued to mob the owl. During the next hour, this second hawk swooped down towards the owl 17 times, on each occasion hovering for a few seconds just above it: twice it took hold of the owl, and on the fourth swoop tore off a large piece of skin and feathers from the neck region; on the 11th swoop it attacked from behind and tore off the head, which fell onto the snow nearby; during the first three swoops (but not afterwards) it screamed rhythmically, a sound similar to that given by parents in spring when disturbed at the nest (later, between swoops, while perched in nearby spruces, it uttered a weak, high-pitched, whistling-squeaking sound); on swoops 12-17, it appeared more and more intent on landing on the headless owl. It finally disappeared, probably owing to human disturbance.

17th January 1979, Heimdal (stuffed owl). Several crows had already been shot, and a flock of about 50 was mobbing the owl, when a juvenile Goshawk appeared (probably the same one as in November 1978); it swooped down twice over the owl, the first time giving the rhythmic scream.

21st January 1979, Heimdal (stuffed owl). The crows were mobbing the owl, and one had been shot, when a juvenile Goshawk (probably again the same) appeared, attacked the owl from behind and almost succeeded in knocking it down; the rhythmic scream was also given. The crows disappeared when the hawk arrived. Before it flew off, the hawk made a second swoop towards the owl. After a few minutes the crows returned, cawing loudly as they approached the overturned owl, and perched in the trees. An adult Goshawk then landed in a treetop close to the owl; it was probably interested mainly in the crows, but also peered down towards the owl at times; it perched for some minutes before flying off, but later returned once. The juvenile Goshawk also returned once more, swooping down again towards the owl.

4th February 1979, Heimdal (stuffed owl with crow skin at its feet). Just after the crows had started to mob the owl, a juvenile Goshawk appeared and attacked it several times, touching it on three occasions; the rhythmic scream was heard. On the final attack it swooped down from the top of a 15m-high spruce.

A flock of mobbing crows seems to attract Goshawks, which are able to surprise and attack them while their attention is concentrated on something else. This is precisely the strategy used by shooters: the crows are so intent on mobbing the owl that one can approach them more closely. Consequently, such mobbing behaviour does not seem to fit Bourne's (1977) hypothesis, since it would appear to increase the chances of the crows being killed by hawks (cf. Myers 1978). The owl was, however, a dummy; had it been a live one, the hawks might have been more interested in it, and thus less so in the crows. On the last occasions witnessed, a juvenile Goshawk did mob and attack the owl, but did not carry off any of the dead crows; it is, however, doubtful whether a Goshawk would attack a live Eagle Owl, although it might mob it.

My observations also revealed that Magpies *Pica pica* very readily mob a stuffed Eagle Owl: often they are the first bird species to discover it, and, by their screaming, attract crows to the scene. The mobbing response of Magpies seems to last for a shorter time than that of crows. This appears to fit Bourne's hypothesis: the Magpies let the crows take over.

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Feeding behaviour of Spotted Redshank flocks Several observers have recorded Spotted Redshanks *Tringa erythropus* upending in the manner of surface-feeding ducks (*Brit. Birds* 54: 403-404; 55: 87), and O. J. Merne saw them feeding in an excited, compact flock with their bills held horizontally just under the water surface (*Brit. Birds* 62: 495). During 1960-79, at Needs Oar Point, Hampshire, the annual autumn peaks of Spotted Redshanks have varied from 30 to 70. The waders are driven in by the rising tide to a series of small pools (the largest about 50 × 150m); most assemble on the same pool, and regular visits over the 20-year period have provided ample opportunity to study the species' feeding habits. Swimming, upending, and feeding in a tightly packed flock are in fact normal, but I have been able to observe tightly packed feeding flocks in more detail than Mr Merne and have recorded differences from his single observation. The typical pattern in autumn, when a number of Spotted Redshanks are on the same pool, is as follows. From being scattered all over the pool, a compact flock will suddenly assemble at one spot and start to feed in an almost frenzied fashion; this soon attracts others into the group (as many as 70 together); they all gather so close that many are touching their neighbours, and almost always in water deep enough to cover the lower part of their bodies if they stand normally, or even deep enough to cause them to swim. They then move quite rapidly backwards and forwards as a group, each individual most of the time with its bill, head and neck under water in a position that tilts its body until the tail is pointing almost straight upwards, so that the flock usually appears as a mass of tails pointing skywards; when one does raise its head above water, it can clearly be seen to swallow prey, the head being kept above for the minimum time necessary for this. At any one time, probably 80-90% of the redshanks have their heads immersed. When wading, the upended position is held for several seconds, not less than a second as I recorded for swimming individuals (*Brit. Birds* 55: 87). All the time the flock is feeding, there is a constant babble of noise, the note being that described as a quiet quacking, or 'uck-ooock' (*Brit. Birds* 59: 152); from a flock of 40-50, the noise can be heard at 200-300m. It seems that most of the

waders are calling throughout the whole process, although, at any one time, very few will have their heads above water, and most of those, as already described, are in the act of swallowing prey. The only conclusion that I can reach, unlikely as it may seem, is that the waders continue to utter the note when their heads are under water (I have heard flocks in flight use the same note, at times apparently with a closed bill). After a period of up to 20 minutes, the flock breaks up and disperses round the pool, but it is seldom long before a new gathering forms, either in the same place or in a different part of the pool. I have watched at close range for continuous sessions of up to five hours, and the communal feeding has continued on and off throughout. I have not often seen the Spotted Redshanks hold their bills out horizontally as described by Mr Merne. They seem to plunge them right down to the bed of the pool, and I have the impression that the prey (which I have not been able to identify) is disturbed by the movement of the flock. I have not seen any other species of wader join the flocks, although from time to time several others have been present.

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Winter roosts and habits of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls A. H. Davis and Robin Prytherch (*Brit. Birds* 69: 281-286) warned that distinction between Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus* by habitat is far from clear-cut. Observations at four Norfolk owl roosts during winter 1980/81 confirmed this, although both species did show some differences in behaviour within the roosts.

Roost 1 (three Short-eared; one Long-eared). On an open heath of about 40ha, the surrounding land arable with extensive mature deciduous woodland; ground vegetation predominantly bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* with a few scattered clumps of mixed hawthorn *Crataegus*, bramble *Rubus* and elder *Sambucus*.

The Short-eared Owls roosted among the scattered bushes in varying positions on the ground, on dead elders or dead brambles, or on the more open branches of hawthorn, with occasional individuals low down in fairly thick cover. The Long-eared roosted about 100m away, deep within one of several hawthorns grouped in a hollow.

Roost 2 (one Short-eared; three Long-eared). On a 20-ha heath of dense hawthorn with a few open bracken and rough grass clearings, the surrounding land mostly arable with scattered patches of woodland and a small area of permanent grass.

Rather typically, the Long-eareds roosted deep within a thick hawthorn bush at the edge of a thicket, overlooking a rough grass clearing. The single Short-eared, when first located, roosted on the ground, often within 20m of the Long-eared Owl bush; eventually it roosted in the same bush, within 1½ m of the closest Long-eared. Although sitting under the canopy about 2m from the ground, it was not in thick cover like its neighbours; it consistently used the same perch, while the Long-eareds frequently changed position from day to day. Pellets from this roost showed that both species were concentrating on the same main prey.

Roost 3 (seven Short-eared). The roost area was about 2ha of a 170-ha low-lying boggy heath, with scattered silver birches *Betula pendula* giving way to a denser area of young conifers up to 6m high; arable land predominated on one side of the heath, and mature mixed woodland on the other.

Typically, the owls roosted close together in the open boggy area, on raised tussocks, broken birches or tree stumps. Especially in stormy weather, however, they frequently roosted under, or 1-2m up in, the conifers, when they tended to be more scattered. By the amount of pellets and droppings, these tree roosts were regularly used.

Roost 4 (six Long-eared). About 100 ha of heathland and conifer wood, with mostly fairly dense 5-m high birches, and bracken and heather *Calluna vulgaris* ground cover; surrounding land mostly arable and permanent grass with some mixed woodland.

When first located, the owls were in a group of half-a-dozen 5-m high conifers within the birch scrub, only 15 m from a rough track. This site was more open than the conifers at Roost 3. Although pellets and droppings indicated regular use, the owls deserted in favour of a group of mature conifers about 300 m away.

The two species showed a marked difference in their agility in cover. The Long-eareds hopped nimbly from branch to branch in thick hawthorn with apparent ease. A Short-eared, however, seen to land on the outer, thin, branches of a hawthorn, immediately lost balance and fell about, flapping its wings to regain balance before it finally settled. This difference, between a typically tree-haunting bird and a generally more terrestrial one, is not unexpected. Flushed Long-eared Owls, being shorter-winged and longer-tailed than Short-eareds, twisted and turned through thick bushes with relative ease, generally flying low under the canopy and around bushes (under certain conditions, e.g. during a Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* shoot, when beaters were driving the cover, they flew high). Flushed Short-eared Owls tended to be less tied to cover, soon moving off and frequently flying high.

Tolerance to human beings differed: Short-eared Owls readily took flight at 50 m, while Long-eareds allowed an approach to within 10 m of their roosting bush before leaving. The latter, once disturbed, however, became much more flighty, moving off if one came within 30 m. A Long-eared roost could be easily watched from 30 m or less without disturbing the owls. Short-eared Owls, despite taking flight more readily, may tolerate disturbance at winter roosts to a greater degree than Long-eareds. After a hectic week of mechanical brush clearance, pigeon shooting and chain-saw activity close to Roost 2, only the Short-eared remained on its branch, the Long-eareds having deserted. Similarly, the Long-eared Owls at Roost 4 deserted their original roost after disturbance by a shooting party, and there are other records of this species deserting roosts if continually flushed. In contrast, the Short-eared Owls continued to occupy Roost 1 despite continual disturbance by birdwatchers, walkers and others. Short-eared Owls appeared less concerned at being forced to fly in the daytime than Long-eared Owls, which subsequently sought a more secure roost.

As Davis & Prytherch mentioned, the nocturnal habits of Long-eared and the diurnal habits of Short-eared may have been overstated. Day-flying Short-eared Owls, especially breeding ones or migrants, are particularly noticeable in spring (and, naturally, all owls may be forced to hunt in daytime following a series of wet, windy nights). The Short-eared Owl may, however, be much more crepuscular, if not nocturnal, in winter. For example, at the three Norfolk roosts which held Short-eared Owls during the daytime, no hunting owls were seen until just before dusk. Pellets showed varying numbers of wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* and common rat *Rattus norvegicus* remains (very high at Roost 2): these are mainly nocturnal rodents. Short-eared Owls have also been seen by car headlights, hunting in total darkness.

JOHN B. KEMP

1 College Farm, Great Massingham, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Letters

White-headed Duck misidentified as Ruddy Duck I believe that the bird depicted in plate 3 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 9) is a female White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and not a female Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis*. We breed these two species here at Arundel, so I am very familiar with them. In the photograph, the most noticeable characteristics are the swollen area of the bill above the nostrils, and the very white cheeks. JONATHAN G. SMITH
Senior Warden, The Wildfowl Trust, Mill Road, Arundel, Sussex BN18 9PB

We apologise for this error, which was also pointed out to us by John Fitzpatrick. Eds

Semipalmated Plover in western Palearctic When discussing the status of the Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, P. A. Dukes (*Brit. Birds* 73: 463) did not refer to an interesting record: one ringed in autumn 1972 on the Magdalen Islands, in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada, and recaptured during the same season in the Azores (Burton & McNeil, *Rev. Géogr. Montréal* 29: 305-334; McNeil & Burton, *Wilson Bull.* 39: 167-171).

Cadieux (1970, MSc thesis, University of Montréal) showed that the highest theoretical flight-range capability of the species is 1,900 miles (about 3,000km). This fact, combined with field observations and ringing data, allowed Burton & McNeil (1975) to believe that, in autumn, an important proportion of Semipalmated Plovers—at least of adults—may reach the Lesser Antilles from the southeastern Canadian coasts by an offshore, over-Atlantic route. Writing about the Azores record, they emphasise: 'This is a flight of about 3,200km which, in fact, does not require more energy from such a shorebird than to reach the Lesser Antilles' (my translation).

PIERRE YÉSOU

4 rue Henri Servain, 22000 Saint-Brieuc, France

Kestrel kites Following the advertisement for 'Kestrel kites' in 'News and comment' in October 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 491) we wrote to *Brit. Birds* in December 1979, in a fairly light-hearted manner (which scientists occasionally do), to make several serious points. First, during observations of breeding birds on the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve and elsewhere on the Northumberland coasts, we had noticed considerable disturbance to breeding birds caused by the flying of kites. Secondly, people buying RSPB kites presumably tend to be interested in birds, and some may combine leisure activities in similar areas. Thirdly, coastal nesting birds, such as Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, have to withstand considerable unintentional disturbance from holiday-makers and their dogs, as well as bird-watchers, and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* patrol the area looking for birds flushed from their nests. Lastly, we posed the question: Should the RSPB not give some warning to purchasers of their kites?

We received an enthusiastic response to our letter from the editor of *British Birds*, but, despite several enquiries, nothing further appeared until nearly two years later (*Brit. Birds* 74: 402). We can only assume that the RSPB wished neither to include a warning nor to risk their sales figures. The item which did eventually appear included, not our comments and queries, but a passing reference to them, and suggested that any effects could be due to the small boys flying the kites, rather than to the kites themselves. This, of course, ignores the fact that kites may be more conspicuous and visible over a much greater area than their operators, especially on uneven ground, such as the sand-dunes which we originally mentioned.

We are grateful to the two people who wrote with their comments (*Brit. Birds* 75: 46), and note that both mentioned effects of kites in some circumstances. We certainly did not claim that kites always affected birds—and indeed mentioned mainly a possible effect on breeding birds in a particularly sensitive habitat. Our observations were based on four summers of fieldwork on Lindisfarne and additional visits to other parts of the Northumberland coast. Peter Conder's negative evidence from Alderney in autumn seems to us irrelevant to the points at issue.

M. W. PIENKOWSKI and P. R. EVANS

Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE

Rarities Committee news and announcements

P. J. Grant and the Rarities Committee

The 1982 annual meeting was held at Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, on 27th March. Keith Vinicombe, who was successful in an election (*Brit. Birds* 75: 292), started his membership on 1st April 1982. He takes the place vacated, as the longest-serving member (after six years), by Brian Little, whose expertise, and sound advice and opinions, will be greatly missed.

Election of new member

Nominations are invited for a member to fill the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 31st March 1983: they should be sent to me by 31st December 1982. The Committee's nomination is Peter G. Lansdown, whose careful record-documentation and constructive criticism of some of the Committee's work has already been most valuable; after a lapse of two years, the return of Welsh representation on the Committee would be an added asset of his membership.

Removal of species from Rarities Committee list

It was agreed that a species would automatically be considered for possible removal from the list of those assessed by the Committee if more than 150 individuals had occurred during the past ten years *and* it had occurred at least ten times in at least eight of those years. Other species of slightly less frequent or consistent occurrence, especially those which are easy to identify, may also be considered for removal. After discussion and a vote on each of the eligible species, it was agreed that the following ten would no longer be considered by the Committee after *31st December 1982* (in brackets are the 1971-80 total, and the number of years with ten or more records):

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (17,737, 9)
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (179, 10)
 White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (166, 6)
 Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tringites subruficollis* (270, 9)
 Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (390, 10)
 Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* (275, 10)
 Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (238, 10)
 Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (388, 10)
 Serin *Serinus serinus* (199, 9)
 Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (403, 10)

Records of these species should still be sent to the appropriate county recorders. The Committee noted that arrangements are being made for records of these species to be collated and analysed regularly in *British Birds*. Papers covering the identification problems of each of the ten excised species will appear in this journal in due course. The Committee will, however, be pleased to continue to consider any particularly difficult or contentious record at the request of the county or regional recorder.

P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

121. Rarities Committee meeting, March 1982; left to right: M. J. Rogers (secretary), B. Little, P. J. Grant (chairman), J. R. Mather, D. J. Holman, T. P. Inskipp, K. E. Vinicombe, D. J. Britton, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and R. F. Porter (*Tennant Brown Photography*)



Announcement

OUP books We are pleased to announce that we have made arrangements with Oxford University Press for several more books to be available (post free in UK & Eire, add 50p overseas) to *BB* subscribers through British BirdShop (see page vii):

A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World By Richard Howard & Alick Moore (£17.50)

The Sulidae By Bryan Nelson (£40.00)

Estrildid Finches of the World By Derek Goodwin (£25.00)

The Cotingas By D. W. Snow (£30.00)

Fieldguide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas By Salím Ali (£8.75)

These books will be available for only a limited period, so please order at once.

News and comment

Bob Spencer and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Enough to turn a worm A print-out from PATSEARCH—an information service operated by Pergamon International Information Corporation of McLean, Va., USA—gives the following details of a recently patented invention: 'An apparatus for improving flight safety in the vicinity of an airport by reducing the incidence of birds in the vicinity of the landing strip. Worm traps are disposed adjacent opposed marginal edges of the landing strip and extended longitudinally therealong and have an outer upper wall surface sloping downwardly and outwardly from the landing strip to the adjacent grassed area. The worm trap is located in a trench along the landing strip and a narrow strip between the worm trap and wall of the trench provides entry for the worms into the trench. The worm traps have an inner chamber for collecting the worms as they crawl therein through an opening adjacent to the bottom of the worm trap. Means are provided within the chamber to electrocute the worms. Easy when you know how! (Contributed by John Pemberton)

Rook shoot Several correspondents have sent us press-cuttings announcing a Rook shoot. The following, from *The Birmingham*

Post of 1st March, is typical. 'A massive shoot of rooks and crows will take place in Shropshire during a fortnight in May. Organised by the National Farmers' Union, the shoot is designed to counter the birds' attacks on growing corn in spring and ripening corn at harvest time. Farmers say these attacks have reached alarming proportions.' Since the recent BTO Rook survey revealed that the Rook population has declined, in places by as much as 40%, have the Rooks become more dependent on corn, or is it possible that the NFU has been jumping to conclusions?

Award to the GOM of Welsh ornithology The University of Wales has awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science to Colonel H. Morrey Salmon CBE, in recognition 'of his distinction as an ornithologist and nature conservationist.'

The National Museum of Wales in conjunction with the Cardiff Naturalists' Society, and as part of the Museum's 75th anniversary celebrations, is organising an exhibition to illustrate 75 years of ornithology in Wales, as a tribute to Colonel Salmon's work over this period. The exhibition will be open to the public from 19th March to 12th July 1982 at the Museum's

Main Building in Cathays Park, Cardiff, and will then be shown at Oriel Eryri, the Museum's new environmental gallery at Llanberis, Gwynedd. (*Contributed by Douglas Bassett*)

Hunting accidents in France *Le Chasseur Français* reports in its first issue for 1982 that there were 125 hunting accidents in 1980, the latest year for which figures are available. Of these, 29 were fatal. We do not know what the comparable British figures are, but surely they cannot be as bad as that. And yet 1980 was for France a relatively good year. For example, there were 89 shooting fatalities in 1967, 70 in 1971 and 69 in 1974. The figures suggest that winter birdwatching in France can be a hazardous occupation, so all credit to our French ornithological friends for being the first to start a winter atlas.

Hunting in Italy A table we have received from an Italian colleague shows that there are 1,701,853 licensed hunters in Italy. In this context, the term 'hunting' embraces mammals as well as birds, and bird-catching as well as shooting. Nevertheless, the figures do give some indication of the enormous pressure that there is on wildlife in that country. How many travel firms run birdwatching tours to Italy? Precious few. If you are thinking of a birding holiday in Italy, you might wish to avoid the regions of Toscana (254,702 licensed hunters) and Lombardia (182,604). In contrast, Valle d'Aosta (2,116) and Molise (9,698) regions might be rather more attractive. In the light of the foregoing (which covers only one sector) it is encouraging to see that the ICBP conservation programme for 1982 includes item number 4.301: 'Provide financial support through funds raised by a special European Committee for educational and other projects in Mediterranean countries aimed at reducing killing of migratory birds.'

Mass deaths of birds In Britain, the lighthouse on the island of Bardsey has perhaps the worst reputation as a killer of migrating birds, and one knows that on a bad night (mercifully fairly rare) perhaps as many as 500 migrants may die. The Canadian Long Point Bird Observatory newsletter for winter 1981 reports a big kill at the Long Point light, when, in three nights in early September, 903 birds were collected. Even more alarmingly, it was "Three days before the enormous kill of birds at the Lennox Generating Station on eastern Lake Ontario, where over 10,000 birds were killed in three nights."

Next, there is a disturbing note in the

autumn 1981 issue of the *Journal of Field Ornithology* (formerly known as *Bird Banding*). Let us quote verbatim: 'On 14 December 1979, an immature Laughing Gull was turned in by an unknown individual at a bird salvage station set up by the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife at Lihue, Kauai. The salvage station, one of 9 set up round the Island, serves as a collection point for hundreds of Newell's Shearwaters (*Puffinus puffinus newelli*) that injure themselves by flying into utility wires on Kauai's brightly lit highways and urban areas. Citizens co-operate annually by picking up fallen birds and turning them in at salvage stations.'

Kills of 900 in three nights; kills of 10,000 in three nights; 9 'bird salvage stations' on a single island: what is happening? Do these sorts of thing happen, and on this scale, in Britain and Europe? Undetected? Or do our birdwatchers and conservationists not care? Or do we, by and large, manage to avoid them, whether by design or fortuitously? Perhaps the subject needs a wider airing.

California Condor With only 30 of these magnificent birds known to exist, they are the object of one of the world's most intensive conservation programmes. Imagine the concern, therefore, when a pair pushed its single egg out of the nest, in what has been referred to as 'a family squabble'. Imagine, too, the relief when—after a decent interval—the pair relaid.

A rose by any other name Professor Tony Pettet writes: 'You may remember my writing to you about a Little Egret I saw near Khartoum with a wing-tag. I eventually discovered it had been tagged and ringed in the Huleh Reserve in Israel. Because I had advertised in the local Ministry of Information journal, *Sudanow*, I wrote a short note about the bird, only to be told that I could not say the bird had come from Israel—partly because having any connection with Israel is a serious disadvantage in the Sudan, and because it was "a political statement". "O.K. Palestine, if you prefer." "No, no. That won't do either; that's a political statement as well." And there it stuck, everyone getting hot and irritable, until someone remembered that the Huleh Reserve was in Upper Galilee—which is what was printed in the note. No political statement, but everyone knows where the bird came from. I am glad to say the bird survived its journeys in the Sudan and has been seen several times since in Israel.'

Recent reports

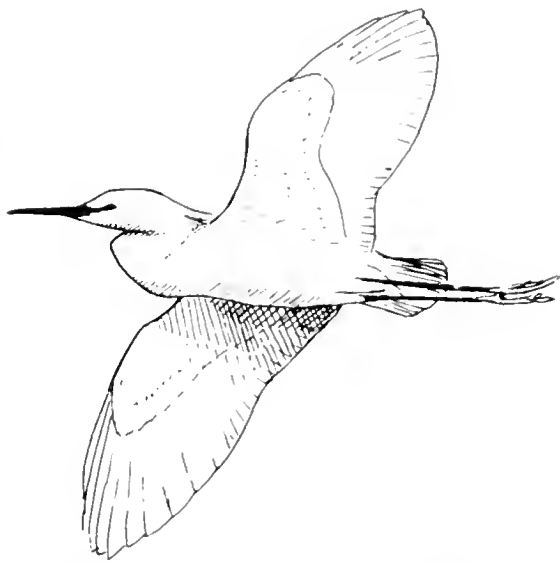
R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**

All dates in this report refer to April unless otherwise stated. The month was dominated by anticyclonic weather conditions and was mostly dry and settled. During the first five days, an anticyclone to the south and east brought in some warm, southerly air. The pattern changed when high pressure became established to the west of the country, and cooler air arrived from the north by the 8th. These cool but sunny conditions lasted until the last week of the month, when cool, rainy westerlies arrived as pressure declined. Migrant arrivals were generally unspectacular and, indeed, British east coast observatories especially were treated to a month of exceptional quietness birdwise. Fair Isle (Shetland) reported almost no migrants, with only one day worthy of report, and that for only six common species!

Waterside and wading birds

White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* produced a minor influx, with individuals at Arne (Dorset), at Dwyran (Anglesey) on 6th, at Queensferry (Clwyd) and then, on 7th, at Meols (Merseyside), at St Davids (Dyfed) on 28th and at Dartford (Kent) on 1st May. A **Crane** *Grus grus* reached The Loons (Orkney) on 20th. On 1st May, a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* visited Brundall (Norfolk) and **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* were found at Fleet Pond (Hampshire) on 23rd, at Ynys-hir (Dyfed) and at Newport (Dyfed) on 28th. **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were located at Stodmarsh (Kent) on 28th March, on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 1st and at Cley (Norfolk) on 23rd. Nearctic waders were around in the form of a long-staying **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Aveton Gifford (Devon) for most of the month, **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Stodmarsh and at Bude (Cornwall) on 7th and 8th and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* probing Pennington Marshes (Hampshire) on 16th. Three early **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* turned up at Salthouse (Norfolk) on 16th, in advance of an expected East Anglian passage in May. **Kentish Plovers** *C. alexandrinus* made a poor showing. Rough

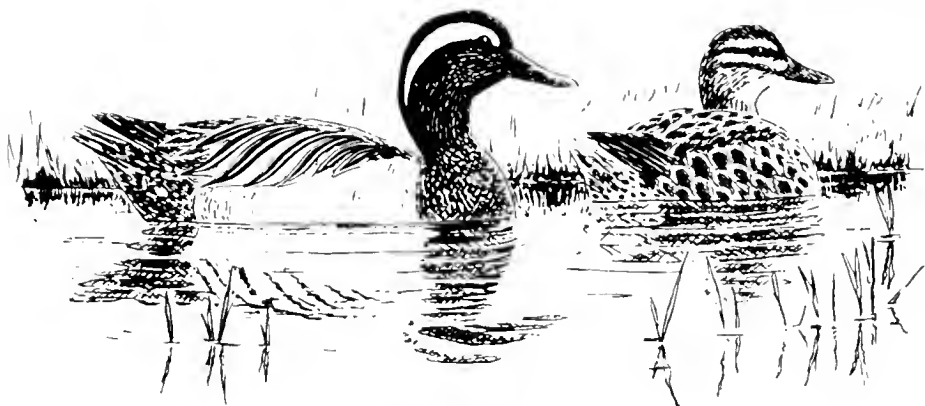


weather at Berwick-on-Tweed (Northumberland) on 7th and 8th brought high totals of 660 **Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* and 112 **Purple Sandpipers** *C. maritima*.

Gulls, terns and skuas

The southwest (and Ireland) continued to be the place for rare gulls, including several of the **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* previously reported still hanging on. In addition to two at Plymouth (Devon) and one at Radipole (Dorset), two were seen at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) by the ace gull-watchers who study its huge roost—one on 14th March and another on 20th and 25th March. A **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* was at Plymouth (Devon) from 14th onwards and it or another was at Radipole from 29th. A **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* added to the glut of American gulls when it came to Penzance (Cornwall) on 3rd. Even rarer, the third British and Irish record of a bird showing the characteristics of the northeast Canadian race *kumlien* of the **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* was detected at Chew Valley Lake on 16th. Other Iceland Gulls lingered in Kent and the northeast, plus one at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex) on 4th and





one or two on five dates on Fair Isle. **Little Gulls** *L. minuta* included 38 at Meols on 7th. Calm, anticyclonic weather induced some overland movement of **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla*, a typical spring feature, with 35 at Farnoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire) on 14th and, at Chew, 18 on 13th and 11 until 15th. **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* turned up at Chew on three March dates and there was one at Prawle Point (Devon) on 17th and three at Radipole during the month. **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* sometimes pass through inland in large numbers during a concentrated passage in spring and this was illustrated by 142 at Staines Reservoirs (Surrey) on 29th. In Orkney, first dates for returning migrants included 31st March for **Sandwich Tern** *S. sandvicensis*, 13th for **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* and 21st for **Arctic Skua** *S. parasiticus*. A noteworthy record is that of 21 **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* thoroughly studied on the Inner Solway between Gretna and Eastriggs (Cumbria) in fierce westerly gales on 3rd May. The second dead **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* of the winter on Orkney was found at Stromness on 3rd.

Wildfowl

Further **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* included one at Swinbrook Pool (Oxford)

from late January through to March and one, the third county record, at Sunbiggin Tarn (Cumbria) from 4th to 10th. An **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was at Elmley (Kent) around 16th and **Garganeys** *A. querquedula* were in moderate numbers in Kent, south-west England and at Chew, where there were seven by 25th, a good total there. **Golden-eyes** *Bucephala clangula* reached a new record at the last locality, with 123 on 10th. Finally, reports of both **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*—at Swithland (Leicestershire) in late March—and hybrid **White-headed** × **Ruddy Ducks** *O. jamaicensis* still come in, and it is difficult to sort out how many of what may be involved!

Birds of prey

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* reports included something of a flurry on the east coast this winter, and one on Orkney from 16th to 19th could have originated from wild European stock or introduced Scottish birds—the latter, incidentally, have large Darvic rings. A splendid **Gyrfalcon** *Falco rusticolus* livened up the exceptionally poor month on Fair Isle on 12th, and an early **Hobby** *F. subbuteo* was in Leicestershire from 21st to 30th March. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* included one at Prawle



Point on 13th March, odd ones in Kent in that month and one at Spurn Point (Humberside) on 23rd. A **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* passed over Dungeness (Kent) on 29th March, and **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* included westerly ones at Gwenffrwd (Powys) on 31st March, Bude on 5th and Llangorse Lake (Powys) on 24th.

Near-passerines

Alpine Swifts *Apus melba* sailed over lucky observers on the Lizard (Cornwall) early in the month and at Dungeness on 11th, as well as one or two coastal sites in Sussex.

Hoopoes *Upupa epops* included birds at Dungeness on 28th March, then April ones at Red Rocks (Merseyside), Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), on Guernsey, at Thurlestone (Devon) and in the Biggleswade area (Bedfordshire). A **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* appeared at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 22nd.

locality also recorded a **Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* on 22nd and 29th. North Wirral (Merseyside) had 55 **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* and 30 **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* around 19th. **Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* included 250 of the nominate race on Shotwick Fields (Clwyd) on 17th. **Serins** *Serinus serinus* included one at Prawle Point on 11th, one at Holkham (Norfolk) on 28th and one singing at Cley on 1st May. A superb summer male **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* visited Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) on 21st and 22nd. A controversial bunting which was watched at Sizewell (Suffolk) from 21st to 23rd looked in some respects like a **Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* and in others more like a **Pine Bunting** *E. leucocephalos*, and some observers invoked hybrid origin to explain its baffling features. There was, however, no doubt about a remarkable 'first' at Portland Bill (Dorset), a



122. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Dorset, April 1982 (A. T. Moon)

Great Spotted Cuckoos *Clamator glandarius* were found at two localities in Cornwall: Wadebridge on 8th and Porthgwarra on 8th and 9th. **Collared Doves** *Streptopelia ducacota* rarely achieve a mention in these reports, but 66 at Spurn Point on 17th was unprecedented.

Passerines

Two **Waxwings** *Bombicilla garrulus* remained, and displayed, at an Essex site all month. **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were frequent in March on the Kentish coast and there were 11 or more on the Suffolk coast on 4th, plus singles at Spurn on 22nd and at Gibraltar Point on 3rd and 17th. The latter

Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis* from 11th to 16th (plate 122). Can 1982 continue where 1981 left off?

Request

The Rarities Committee (Hon. Sec., Mike Rogers, address inside front cover) would be grateful for any information concerning two **Sooty Terns** *S. fuscata* reported from Jersey on 16th August 1971 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 337).

Latest news

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, Midhope Moor (South Yorkshire); **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Benacre (Suffolk).

Reviews

Bird Detective. By Peter Robinson. Elm Tree Books, London, 1982. 159 pages; 12 photographs. £7.95.

Peter Robinson is the Senior Investigations Officer of the RSPB and this book tells the birdwatcher at large something of his work. The Investigations Department forms only a small part of the RSPB (only four of over 300 permanent members of staff), but is often in the news. The bird protection laws are complex and impinge on many different interests—egg-collecting, keeping birds in captivity (whether song-birds in cages or falcons for flying), taxidermy, selling captive birds and, of course, the activities of what may be hoped to be a minority of gamekeepers unable to operate within the law. The practical problems of detection and enforcement are all here, including both the successful and the unsuccessful prosecutions resulting from long and detailed investigations. Although written as, and succeeding in being, a series of interesting and readable stories, one cannot help but realise the truth of the underlying message: crime involving wild birds is a serious problem that can be combated only by people with expert knowledge. It is just not possible for the ordinary policemen throughout the country to acquire this knowledge and so, for the moment, the RSPB Investigations Department has had to take on this role countrywide. What is really needed, but which the nation apparently cannot afford, is a proper system of enforcement to go with the laws (such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act) passed by Parliament. For the moment, that finance comes from the RSPB. You can help the cause by buying this book—for the RSPB benefits from its sale. You will get, as Prince Charles says in his Foreword, 'real-life detective stories, which make excellent reading'.

CHRIS MEAD

Birdwatching on Inland Fresh Waters. By M. A. Ogilvie, with drawings by Carol Ogilvie. Severn House Naturalist's Library, London, 1981. 160 pages; 28 colour plates and 54 black-and-white plates; many figures and line-drawings. £8.95.

The title of this book should strike a chord in the hearts of the many birdwatchers who cut their first field teeth getting to grips with birds at a local lake or reservoir, or who relish regular visits to such bodies of standing fresh water. For those birders who include rivers, streams and canals on their beat of inland waters, the title is misleading, since the text gives only a passing nod to these habitats.

The book provides a general introduction to the breeding, feeding, mating and movements of birds on still waters, and suggests how to begin studying these birds. Introductory chapters which explain how the nutrient status of different types of standing water affects the abundance of birds, and which show how a variety of species have adapted to life in and around fresh water, are followed by a rather frustrating chapter entitled 'Starting to birdwatch'. This chapter devotes many pages to brief accounts of field characters, pages which most readers who followed the author's advice on choosing a field guide would quickly consider redundant. The fourth chapter is a refreshing contrast to this dead wood—a pot pourri of facts and hypotheses about the breeding habitats and behaviour of groups as diverse as grebes and buntings. The author encourages active study by continually reminding the reader that much new information can still be gleaned from careful observation of birds in the field.

Having whetted the reader's appetite for fieldwork, the fifth chapter gives practical suggestions on how to begin such study. National bird surveys organised by the Wildfowl Trust and the BTO are given particular attention, but the glaring omission of any references to the BTO's Waterways Bird Survey all too clearly illustrates the book's rather cavalier attitude to riparian birds. The final chapter outlines some aspects of the conservation and management of standing fresh waters for birds.

The book is lavishly illustrated with many excellent photographs and with useful drawings by Carol Ogilvie. Good presentation—where appropriate illustrations add sparkle to the flanking text—is a real plus point for this and other titles in the Severn House Naturalist's Library Series. Although it might disappoint some doyens of the riverbank, even birdwatchers who have grown long in the wisdom tooth tramping around inland reservoirs might appreciate this book as an attractive present.

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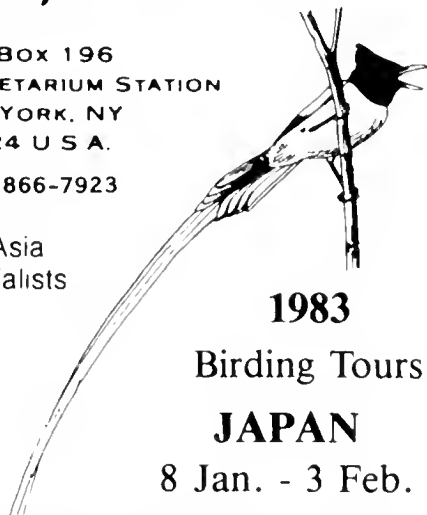
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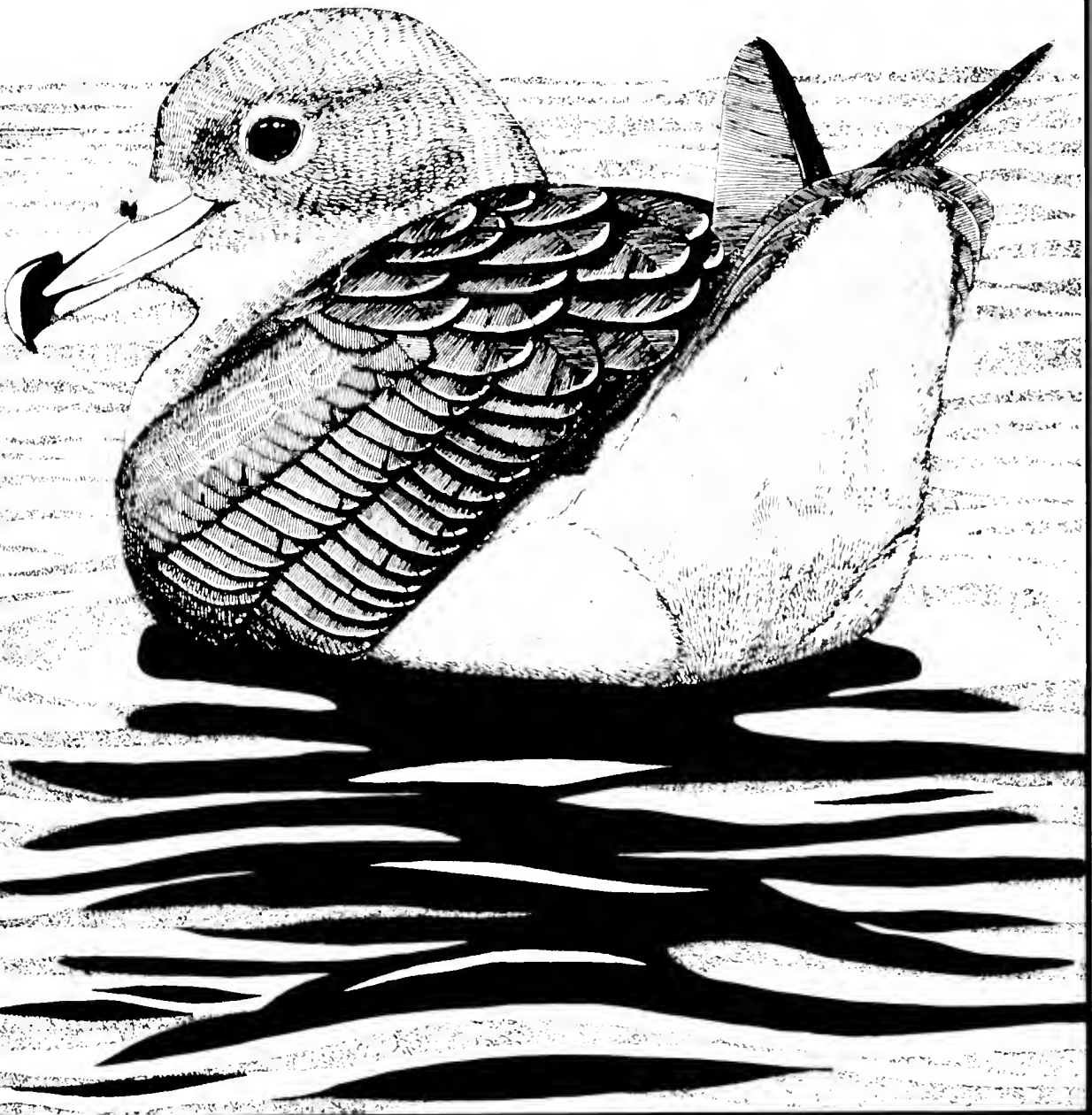
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British Birds

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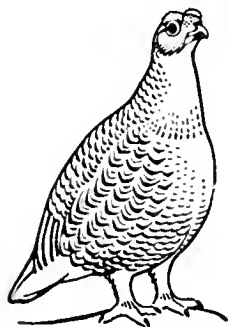
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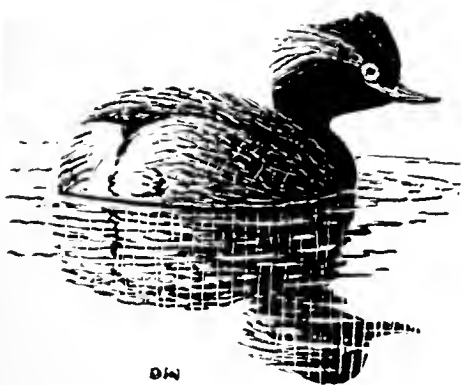
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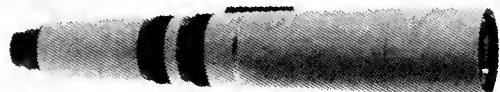
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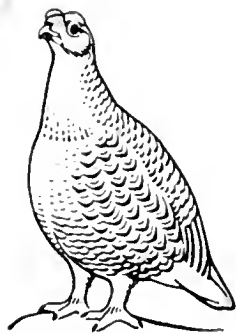


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Editorial

It is at this time each year, on the anniversary of the journal becoming independent of a large publishing house and 'going it alone', that we have to assess *BB*'s financial position again, for the coming 12 months. Our aim is to maintain or improve the journal's contents, with extra papers, notes and photographs. We have to take account not only of current and past inflation, which will have affected our expenditure over the past year, but also predictions of increasing costs in the coming 12 months: paper, printing and postal costs are those which affect us most. We also have to assess the journal's probable circulation level; this is largely guesswork, so must err on the side of caution.

Since any surplus will be devoted to the journal, a mistake in that direction would be forgivable. A deficit, however, could be disastrous, since we should be forced to reduce the size of the journal and produce sub-standard issues towards the end of the year. We must, therefore, be pessimistic when setting new subscription rates, and then hope that prices rise less than anticipated, or that the number of subscribers increases to a higher level than expected.

Our costs in 1982/83 are expected to increase by more than the current rise in the cost of living, but compensatory increases in income from sales of books and bird-sound recordings through 'British BirdShop' and from advertising over the past year have allowed us to keep our subscription price rise this year down to the current inflation level.

Effective from 1st August 1982, the subscription rates will be:

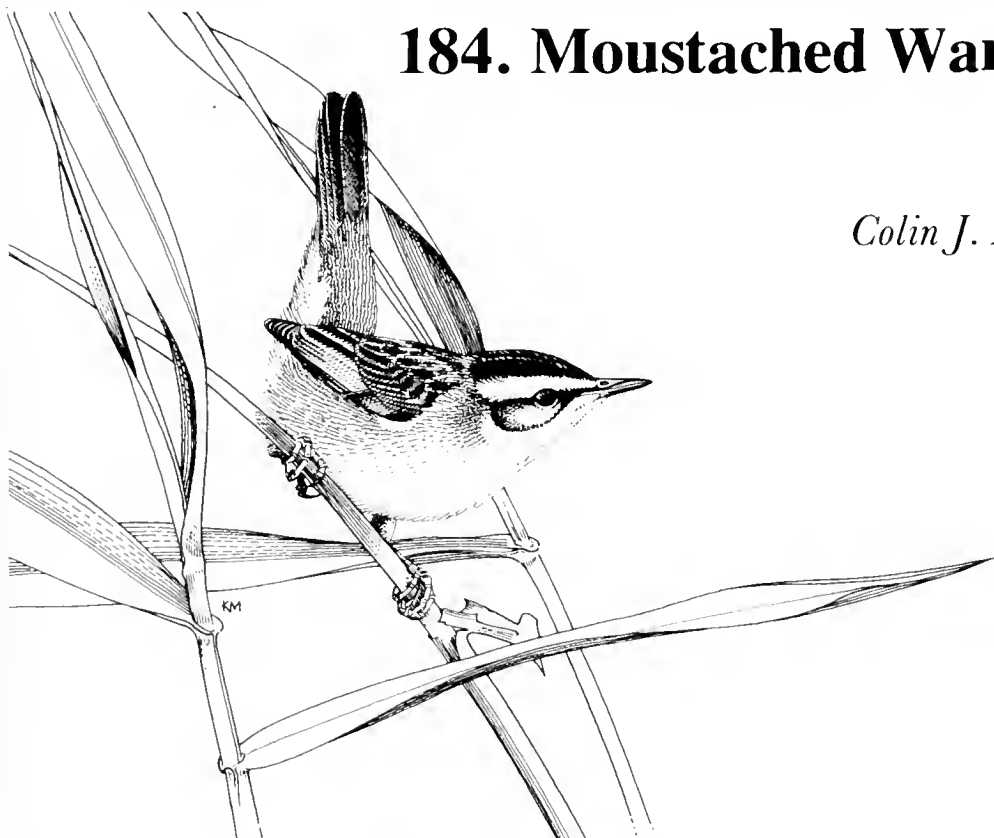
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It was an enormous help to us last year to have subscription renewals for 1982 sent to us during August and September 1981. We hope very much that readers will do the same to help us this year. Not only does this spread the workload for Mrs Erika Sharrock, who single-handedly copes with all subscription and circulation matters, but it also brings in an income for the journal at a time of year when finances are running low. The revenue from this invested income (which would be minute for each individual subscriber) is of considerable benefit to the journal. *Please help us by completing the pull-out subscription form in the centre of this issue and by sending us your cheque/PO for your 1983 subscription now.* Thank you.

Studies of west Palearctic birds

184. Moustached Warbler

Colin J. Bibby



Unlike its western Palearctic congeners, the Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* is not a trans-Saharan migrant. This, however, ought not to be an adequate reason to give it a genus to itself, which it once had as *Luscinola melanopogon* (Parker & Harrison 1963). The Moustached Warbler has a place in British ornithological history as the most contentious and improbable species ever to have been recorded as a 'one-off' breeder here.

The nominate race breeds rather disjointedly around the northern Mediterranean and inland, especially along the Danube (Vaurie 1959; Voous 1960). A larger, duller and paler race, *A. m. mimica*, occurs farther to the east, from the Black Sea to the Caspian and Aral Seas and southwards into Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The breeding range extends from temperate through Mediterranean, steppe and desert climatic zones where summers are characteristically hot (22°-32° July isotherms). It is not yet possible to make an ecological characterisation of this rather wide range (Leisler 1973), but wetlands are very variable in quality, which may confuse simple climatic views. The superficially similar Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* breeds farther north, with little overlap. Where they do overlap in range, such as at Lake Neusiedl in Austria, they are separated by habitat, Moustached Warblers being in wetter places.

The European populations retreat towards the Mediterranean coasts in winter and many of the inland breeding areas are deserted, probably because they are too cold and frequently frozen to support sufficient invertebrate food sources. Some reach North Africa and there are sub-Saharan records from Lake Chad. Recoveries of individuals ringed at Lake Neusiedl

indicate a wintering area in Italy and the Dalmatian coast. The Asiatic population is probably more migratory, moving to north India and Arabia, presumably to escape the lower winter temperatures of a more continental breeding area. Winter movements may vary from year to year depending on the temperature (Bannerman & Bannerman 1958). Leisler (1973) provided the most thorough and recent review of the summer and winter ranges of the species, with maps of recorded localities. The same author is the only person ever to have made any substantial study of the biology and ecology of the species.

Moustached Warblers breed in wetlands, favouring places where Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* are more likely than Sedge Warblers to be their neighbours. Comparative morphological studies (Leisler 1975) show that Moustached Warblers have relatively large feet, with a thick hind toe and long claws. The spread angle of the front toes is comparatively small. These are adaptations of the foot for vertical climbing, and the Moustached Warbler occurs in vegetation with a strong vertical structure, such as reeds *Phragmites* rich in fen-sedge *Cladium*, or beds of club-rush *Scirpus* or bulrush *Typha* (Leisler 1973). It is absent in the thicker pure *Cladium* beds, where a walking species such as the Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* is more at home. It is also absent in the drier areas with a tangle of soft-stemmed vegetation, where Sedge Warblers might occur. The Moustached Warbler's climbing skills are best seen in *Typha*: it is the only European *Acrocephalus* warbler which easily can, and does, walk up the sides of the flattened leaf blades. Wet beds of these rather widely spaced stout-stemmed plants are difficult for small warblers to exploit by any other means; their other characteristic bird is the much larger Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*.

No detailed studies have been made of the foods of the Moustached Warbler, but Leisler describes feeding places as being at or very near the water surface. This is a rich zone for insects, with concentrations of emerging or swarming Chironomid midges, mayflies and others. Feeding on such prey by climbing down stems of emergent plants and picking is reminiscent of the Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, though the Moustached Warbler is probably unlikely to supplement its winter diet with seeds as does that species (Bibby 1981).

Table 1. Foods of Moustached Warblers *Acrocephalus melanopogon* based on analysis of 22 faecal samples from southern France, August 1979
Percentages are given in parentheses

Food items	Total items	Frequency
Araneae (spiders)	30 (10.7)	12 (13.3)
Coleoptera (beetles)	119 (42.5)	20 (22.2)
Lepidoptera larvae	49 (17.5)	18 (20.0)
Homoptera (bugs)	5 (1.8)	3 (3.3)
Heteroptera (bugs)	11 (3.9)	5 (5.6)
Diptera (flies)	19 (6.8)	10 (11.1)
Lepidoptera (moths)	5 (1.8)	5 (5.6)
Hymenoptera (wasps)	35 (12.5)	13 (14.4)
Others	7 (2.5)	4 (4.4)



123. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* at nest with young, Austria, May 1964 (L. Daschitz)

An analysis of 22 faecal samples collected at Capestang (Hérault, France) in August 1979 is shown in table 1. The most numerous and frequent items in the diet were beetles, predominantly very small (about 2mm) Chrysomelids. The Hymenoptera and caterpillars were also very small (mainly less than 5mm). Probably related to the size of prey was the relatively high number of items found per sample. Also notable was the fact

that Diptera accounted for only 7% of foods taken, in spite of their great abundance in marshes in late summer. These findings accord with the previous paragraph. The Moustached Warbler, perhaps even more than the Sedge Warbler, is a gleaner specialist, lacking the fly-catching skills of the Reed Warbler. The very fine bill is also for picking; Reed Warbler bills are more broad and flattened at the base (Green & Davies 1972). Many other insectivorous birds which do not avoid northern winters by migration are also gleaners of small items, for instance the Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*.

The Moustached Warbler is an early breeder. It is likely that this is linked with the peak emergence of Chironomids in spring. Song may start in mid March and is recognisable by opening with notes recalling Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* or Woodlark *Lullula arborea* and ending with a scratchy warble, resembling a Sedge Warbler's. Like the latter's, it frequently includes phrases of mimicry of other species. Unlike the Sedge Warbler, it may sing from deep cover rather than in the air or from exposed perches (Dementiev & Gladkov 1968), though, in Austria, the Camargue and Mallorca, reed-top singing is frequent (P. J. Grant, M. A. Ogilvie and Dr J. T. R. Sharrocks *in litt.*).

The nest appears to be somewhere between those of the Reed and Sedge Warblers. It is often suspended over water, but lacks the elegant neatness of a Reed Warbler's. There are good photographs in Ferguson-Lees (1954). What little is known of the breeding biology is not surprising and does not point to any peculiarities, but there are plenty of gaps in the knowledge. For instance, Lyaister & Sosnin, quoted by Dementiev & Gladkov, say that the male sings fervently around the nest, but does not participate in feeding the young, though *The Handbook* and the Cambridge breeding record (Hinde & Thom 1947) suggest otherwise. Could this be another marshland species with emancipated males and frequent polygyny, as found in the American icterids which also feed in *Typha* beds on emerging insects (Orians 1980)? My guess is no. The Moustached Warbler does not apparently show the size difference between the sexes (Witherby *et al.* 1943; G. R. M. Pepler *in litt.*) which goes with this lifestyle and is such a marked feature of a polygynous species such as the Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* (Bibby 1982). On the other hand, Dementiev & Gladkov (1968) give wing measurements with no overlaps between the sexes, but sadly with no sample sizes.

Clutch sizes are usually three or four (Bannerman 1954), but five and six are also said to occur (Witherby *et al.* 1943). The breeding season may be long enough to permit the rearing of two broods. If this is correct, breeding is rather more like that of the Reed Warbler than the Sedge Warbler. The latter, in Britain, has a larger clutch, but a shorter breeding season (Bibby 1978). The small clutch size could just be a manifestation of the normally smaller clutches found farther south in Europe (Lack 1954). In the fullness of time, it will be interesting to know the survival rate of adult Moustached Warblers. How will they compare with the surprisingly long-lived Reed Warbler (Long 1975)?

In the post-breeding season, the Moustached Warbler has one further surprise: the autumn moult of the juveniles is complete (Leisler 1972).



124. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* at nest with young, Austria, May 1964
(L. Daschitz)

which was one of the supporting grounds for giving the species a genus to itself. In European passerines, this is a feature of a very curious group including Bearded Tit, Long-Tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Woodlark (and perhaps other larks), Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*, House *Passer domesticus* and Tree Sparrows *P. montanus*, and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. The Moustached Warbler looks a bit 'out on a limb', being the only species to be a regular complete post-juvenile moult in a genus which



125. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* at nest with young, Austria, May 1964
(L. Daschitz)

does not otherwise do so. It is apparent, however, that complete post-juvenile moult may be more common as one moves south. For instance, it occurs in Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* and Goldfinch *C. carduelis* in southern Europe, but rarely in these species in Britain (Newton 1972). Perhaps, then, we should not be surprised to see this warbler differing from the rest of the *Acrocephalus* warblers, since it is less migratory and more southern in distribution.

British records of the Moustached Warbler have attracted plenty of



126. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* at nest with young, Austria, May 1964
(L. Daschitz)

contention. A male shot at St Leonards, East Sussex, on 12th April 1915 (Ford-Lindsay 1916) got the species a text in *The Handbook*, but the record later went the way of others from the same time and place in the notorious Hastings Rarities affair (Nicholson & Ferguson-Lees 1962). The occurrence now accepted as the first for Britain is of breeding at Cambridge Sewage-farm in 1946 (Hinde & Thom 1947). This extraordinary record was criticised at the time (Meinertzhagen 1950) and is mentioned in major faunal works with a hint of lingering doubt (e.g. Vaurie 1959; Voous 1960).



127. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Austria, July 1974 (P. Munsterman)

The original details are periodically exhumed for rescrutiny, but continue to pass the rigorous present-day standards for acceptance of rarity records (Anon 1971). The main thrust of objection is that the Moustached Warbler is only a short-range migrant in southern Europe, so that vagrancy to Britain is unlikely. That two individuals of opposite sex should find each other at a sewage-farm in Cambridgeshire and succeed in breeding is even more improbable. Present-day observers of rarities are accustomed to unlikely vagrants, so sheer improbability no longer counts against a record for which the positive identification process is good. The extensive original notes on the case can be faulted by inconsistencies, but these are no more than trivial: slight disagreement will always occur when a group of people independently describe a particular bird. Supporting evidence for this record is, by contrast, impressive: the observers were fully aware of the unlikelihood of such an occurrence. Having decided not to shoot a specimen, at a time when many people might have done otherwise, they missed no other chance to assess the birds fairly and fully. Sceptical and respected ornithologists independently came out expecting to be shown unusually marked Sedge Warblers and, to a man, left believing that they had seen some other species of which Moustached Warbler was the only possibility. Comparisons with skins, with Dresser's illustrations, and with nearby Sedge Warblers were made in the field. The salient identification features of Moustached Warbler were seen on two adults and the young. Short of mist-netting the birds, present-day observers could not have bettered the descriptions, except perhaps in checking on the relative wing-length and proportions which distinguish Sedge and Moustached Warblers. Amongst those who have not studied the case, doubters will probably remain. Anyone who looks at the full documentation, as I was



128. Captive Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*. Austria, date not now known
(B. Leisler)

fortunate to do, will be convinced that Moustached Warblers did indeed breed at Cambridge in 1946.

Subsequent British records are by contrast an anticlimax: two in Hampshire in August 1951 (Wooldridge & Ballantyne 1952), one in Kent in April 1952 (Gillham & Homes 1952), one, caught and examined in the hand, in Buckinghamshire in July 1965 (Harber *et al.* 1966), and one in West Sussex in August 1979 (Rogers *et al.* 1980). So, two out of five acceptable records include the most unusual feature for very rare vagrant passerines of two individuals having been in the same place at the same time. I can offer no explanation as to why they should travel in twos (or pairs?), though this would be a great aid for a species with erratic potential to colonise remote locations. One is reminded of the Bearded Tit's tendency to travel in pairs.

The middle 1960s saw an upsurge of enthusiasm for mist-netting warblers in marshes, which has continued to this day. These studies revised the position of the Aquatic Warbler *A. paludicola* from that of a rare vagrant to that of a regular, if not very numerous, autumn passage migrant through southern Britain. The Moustached Warbler has continued here as such a scarce vagrant that, in spite of improved opportunity, only one has been seen and none caught in the past 15 years. Other northern extralimital records are similarly few.

Provided that it is seen properly, identifying a Moustached Warbler should not be too difficult. The secret, as ever, is thorough familiarity with the common confusion species, in this case the Sedge Warbler. In comparison, the Moustached Warbler has rusty shades on the upperparts and flanks, lacking, except on the rump, in the olive-browns of the Sedge Warbler. The streaking on the upperparts is larger and darker and the head pattern is distinctive. Moustached Warbler crowns are very dark, the supercilium is whitish and bold, becoming broader behind the eye, and is often rather squarely ended: Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*in litt.*) has commented

on the resemblance to the head pattern of a Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*. The lores and ear-coverts are fairly dark, contrasting sharply with the white throat. These features should all be checked. Sedge Warblers are rather variable, so it would be rash to be over-excited by a bird just showing a large supercilium. Juveniles are easier to tell apart than adults. The young Moustached Warbler's crown may be almost black, in striking contrast with the white supercilium. Juvenile Sedge Warblers, on the other hand, often have an ill-defined buffish crown-stripe (hence the ease with which spurious Aquatic Warblers can be found). They also have a speckled breast band lacking in Moustached Warblers. In their new feathers, the differences in upperparts and flank colours are even more obvious. Juvenile Sedge Warblers show olive, or even yellowish, while Moustached Warblers have buff to chestnut shades. The dark moustachial streak from which the species gets its English vernacular name is only faint, but shows in most photographs and, with a good, close view, can be seen in the field.

Care should be used with the tail-cocking behaviour, copied from *The Handbook* into modern texts, as a bald identification point. Moustached Warblers do cock their tails, though this appears to be uncommon, probably associated with alarm (Wallace 1981), perhaps especially when they have young (Hollyer 1978; Oreel 1981). Obviously, Moustached Warblers do not spend all their time in this activity (Kumerloeve 1978;

129. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Israel, November 1981 (H. E. Oddie)





130. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Israel, November 1981 (H. E. Oddie)

Sharrock 1977). A very alarmed Sedge Warbler within centimetres of a Little Owl *Athene noctua* cocked its tail, but this was also associated with wing-flicking and alarm calls (Mellor 1981). Tail-cocking is thus much more likely from a Moustached than a Sedge Warbler, and its observation would add some weight to a suspected identification, but no more. The Moustached Warbler's tail is somewhat more rounded than that of the Sedge Warbler.

Calls of the Moustached Warbler may also be characteristic. One has been likened to a Stonechat's *Saxicola torquata*, and rendered as 'tac-tac' or sometimes 'tac-tac-tac' (Wooldridge & Ballantyne 1952). G. R. M. Pepler (*in litt.*) reports a tick, easily distinguished from other reedbed warblers and like a soft alarm from a chat or a *Sylvia* warbler. Also heard was a brief churring flight call, 'trrrp', not as low as a Savi's Warbler's call and more rapid, but highly distinctive and unlike any Sedge Warbler call.

In western Europe, the two species can be separated unequivocally by measurement, so should cause no trouble whatever in the hand. Some of these features would be obvious from a good field view, and were clear enough to reveal the widely published (e.g. Hammond & Everett 1980) photographs illustrating Moustached Warblers for the Sedge Warblers that they really are (Bibby 1980; Carlson 1980). Previously published



131. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Israel, November 1981 (H. E. Oddie)

wing-formulae (Williamson 1968) referred to skins, where feather shrinkage may produce different results from live birds (Mead 1977). Furthermore, they do not satisfactorily indicate the variation to be expected. For this reason, I show in table 2 a series of measurements of live Moustached Warblers (of the nominate race) from Cape Tang and of Reed and Sedge Warblers from Cambridgeshire for comparison. The Moustached Warbler is a similar sized bird in weight, but much smaller in wing-length. Compared with the migratory species, the wing is much more rounded, with the point being at the fourth primary rather than the third, and the projection of the point beyond the secondaries being only 10mm, compared with nearly 20mm for the other two species. A long first primary and the three emarginations complete the major differences. These adaptations are probably associated with the differences of migratory range, but might also reflect subtle variations of feeding behaviour. By analogy with the *Phylloscopus* warblers (Gaston 1974), it might be predicted that the Moustached Warbler should take more frequent brief flights while feeding. This does not seem likely, and it is perhaps more surprising that Reed and Sedge Warblers have only one emarginated primary.

Table 2. Measurements and wing-formulae of live Moustached *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Sedge *A. schoenobaenus* and Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus*

Measurements (in mm) are means \pm standard deviations taken in the conventional way.
Sample sizes = 25 for each species

In seven Moustached Warblers, wing point, pps4 = 5 and in one p4 = p3

Features measured	Moustached	Sedge	Reed
Wing-length	55.2 \pm 1.63	65.0 \pm 1.88	65.4 \pm 2.02
Weight (g)	10.2 \pm 0.51	10.7 \pm 0.67	11.2 \pm 0.70
Emarginated pps	3, 4, 5	3	3
Notch on p2	12.3 \pm 1.68	10.7 \pm 1.03	11.7 \pm 0.79
P1 longer than coverts	6.7 \pm 0.88	-4.0 \pm 1.38	-1.2 \pm 0.88
P2	6.5 \pm 1.14	1.1 \pm 0.79	2.0 \pm 0.80
P3	1.0 \pm 0.44	Point (all)	Point (all)
P4	Point (all)	1.7 \pm 0.73	1.2 \pm 0.66
P5	0.6 \pm 0.42	5.1 \pm 0.91	4.0 \pm 0.54
P6	2.2 \pm 0.80	7.4 \pm 1.08	6.8 \pm 0.66
P7	4.2 \pm 1.12	10.2 \pm 0.85	9.2 \pm 0.85
P8	5.9 \pm 1.20	12.2 \pm 1.08	11.1 \pm 0.93
P9	7.2 \pm 1.18	14.3 \pm 1.10	13.0 \pm 0.79
P10	9.1 \pm 1.55	16.0 \pm 1.43	14.8 \pm 0.82
Secondaries	10.1 \pm 1.19	19.2 \pm 1.85	17.1 \pm 0.93

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to Giles Pepler, Dr Derek Thomas and Dr Barry Watson for collection and donation of faecal samples and wing-measurements from Capestang. I also thank Bob Hudson who, on behalf of the BOU Records Committee, permitted me to see the original notes concerning the Cambridge breeding record.

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Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. Eds

Swift Telemaster 15-60 × 60 Zoom Spotting Scope

This telescope is at the upper end of the price range (recent advertisements have quoted £165-£175), equivalent to the Bushnell Discoverer 15-60 × 60 (£163-£172).

The Swift Telemaster has several good points. The focusing control and zoom control are close together, so fine adjustment can be made easily with two fingers of the same hand. The field of view is large, and the eyepiece is suitable for use with spectacles with little loss of viewing area. The final 8 cm by the objective lens can be extended to form a rainguard or to reduce

sun-glare, a feature which is very useful and which ought to be—but is not—standard on all ornithological telescopes.

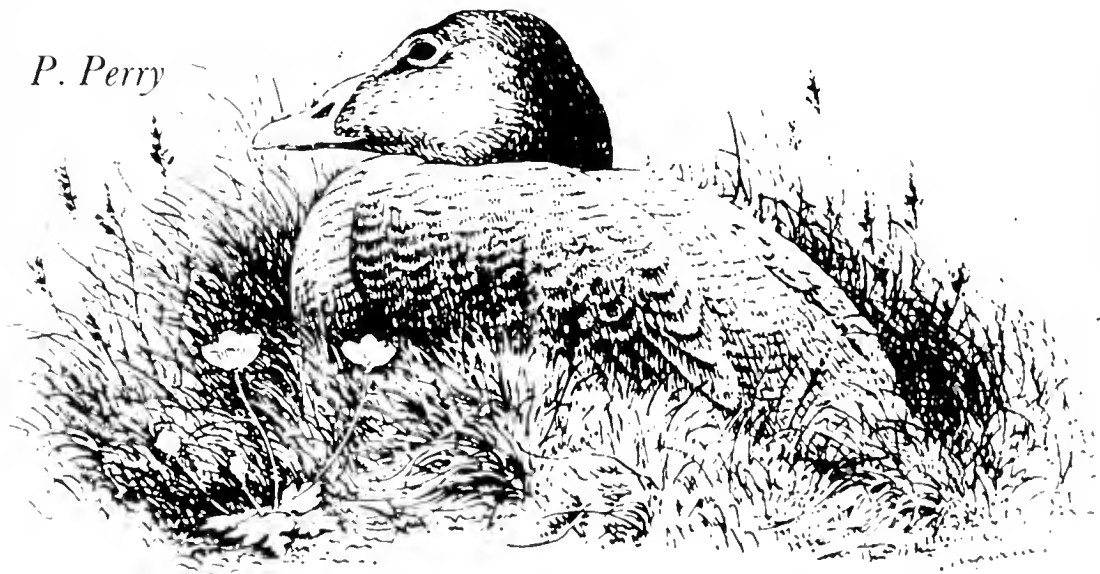
The Telemaster is, however, rather heavy (about 1.45 kg) and I noticed the difference on my shoulder (in comparison with my usual telescope) after an hour's birding. It is also quite long (almost 44 cm), which sometimes resulted in entanglement on undergrowth; birdwatchers who do not yet use a tripod will, however, welcome such a long telescope. The focusing and zoom controls are sunk neatly into a hollow on the top of the scope, which looks streamlined and attractive, but which is inappropriate for an instrument likely to be used in showers (if well-designed, the recess should have been placed on the *side* of the scope). The main fault, however, was optical: the image was clear in the centre of the field of view, but not at the edges. I found this very irritating when, for instance, a bird was swimming within the field of view, could still be seen, but did not remain clear and had to be followed by 'unnecessary' panning of the scope.

Despite some good features, the Swift Telemaster 15-60× Spotting Scope is not the ideal telescope for the birdwatcher. The Swift Table Tripod supplied for use with the Telemaster is hopelessly inadequate for birdwatching (I used a Slikmaster in all my comparisons). A Swift Photo Adaptor for use with the Telemaster is also available, but was not tested.

JTRS

The use of gull nests by Eiders

P. Perry



The eggs of Eiders *Somateria mollissima* have been seen in the nests of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* in several locations (Robertson 1930, Barker 1938, Gross 1938), but few details have been recorded. In recent years, gull nests containing both gull and Eider eggs have been found at South Walney Nature Reserve, Cumbria, where in 1978 I made some observations concerning this phenomenon.



132. Female Eider *Somateria mollissima* sitting on nest built by the Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* in the foreground (Nest 3, table 1) (Philip Perry)

The Walney gullery contains approximately 50,000 pairs of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, as well as nearly 800 pairs of Eiders. The gulls set up territories and begin nest-building before most Eiders have chosen a nest site. In the gull colony, each gull territory is bordered by others, so the Eiders must nest within gull territories. Most Eider nests are shallow hollows lined with materials gathered from within reach of the nest.

Some Eiders, however, do not build a nest, but take over that of a Herring or Lesser Black-backed Gull (plate 132). A female Eider ousts a gull from its nest by walking directly up to it. The gull may then fly up and dive at the duck, which then moves onto the vacated nest. The greater bulk of the Eiders obviously favours them in such encounters. For the first day or two,

133. Nest of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* containing three eggs: one gull and two Eider *Somateria mollissima* (Nest 5, table 1) (Philip Perry)



the female Eider may be accompanied by a male sitting nearby. In the early stages of 'nest stealing', the gulls attack the Eider to try to regain their nest. They jump into the air, calling, and dive repeatedly, attempting to hit the Eider with their feet. The Eider responds by stretching her neck upwards and snaps at the gulls, but remains on the nest. I did not see any gulls actually hit an Eider: they pulled out of their dives just beyond the Eider's reach. One male Herring Gull made about 80 dives in 45 minutes, including 35 in one three-minute period. The gulls do not maintain this level of aggressive activity for long and probably cease entirely after a couple of days. Initially, the Eider visits the nest for limited periods, mainly for egg-laying. In the intervals, the gulls return to their nest and may themselves lay an egg or eggs, so that mixed clutches result (plate 133). Throughout the nest take-over period, the gulls continue to defend their territory from all other intruders, particularly other gulls. Once the Eider completes her clutch, she remains on the nest continuously. After a while, the gulls generally build a new nest within their territory; it may be only just out of reach of the Eider. Thus, the gulls are not prevented from breeding, though they may be considerably delayed. One pair of Lesser Black-backed Gulls which was ousted by an Eider built a replacement nest nearby; when the Eider later deserted, the gulls returned to their original nest site (table 1, Nest 5). Altogether, the breeding of this pair of gulls had been delayed by 14 days.

The Eiders did not always continue their occupation of a gull's nest (table 1). Several nests were found containing Eider eggs being incubated by gulls (plate 134). One case involved a pair of Lesser Black-backed Gulls whose first nest had been taken over by an Eider (Nest 2). The gulls renested nearby (plate 134) and their new nest contained one gull egg and

134. Nest in background (Nest 2, table 1) was taken over by the Eider *Somateria mollissima* from Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* whose second nest is in foreground (Nest 7, table 1). Gull nest contains one gull egg and two Eider eggs (laid by a different Eider); see also plates 135 and 136 (Philip Perry)



Table 1. Summary of details of nests shared by Eiders *Somateria mollissima* and gulls *Larus* at South Walney, Cumbria, in 1978

NESTS TAKEN OVER BY EIDER

Nest 1 Eider took over nest of Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and hatched at least four ducklings.

On 2nd May, Eider first seen on nest, vigorously attacked by Herring Gulls; 29th May, Eider seen with ducklings on nest; 30th May, Eider and ducklings left nest.

Nest 2 Eider took over nest of Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* and hatched at least one duckling, leaving one unhatched egg in nest. See plate 134. Gull renested nearby, see Nest 7, below, and plates 134-136.

3rd May, Eider and Lesser Black-backed Gull both seen on nest with one Eider egg; 30th May, Eider seen on nest with at least one duckling, which, later in the day, left the nest.

Nest 3 Eider took over Herring Gull nest, laid five eggs and hatched four ducklings. Gulls renested nearby and laid full clutch of three eggs. See plate 132.

27th April, two Eider eggs seen in nest sat on by Herring Gull; 28th April, three Eider eggs, again sat on by Herring Gull; 29th April, Eider seen on nest; 3rd May, confirmed that full clutch was five Eider eggs; 22nd May, Herring Gulls had renested nearby and their nest now contained one egg; 23rd May, Herring Gull nest contained two gull eggs; 25th May, Herring Gull nest with three gull eggs; 26th May, Eider had left nest, in which one egg remained; 17th June, one of the Herring Gull's eggs pipping.

Nest 4 Nest containing one gull (probably Lesser Black-backed) egg and three Eider eggs incubated by Eider. Outcome unknown.

Observation made on 30th April.

Nest 5 Eider took over Lesser Black-backed Gull nest. One Eider egg was laid first, followed by another Eider egg and a gull egg a day later. Later, Eider deserted, and nest then contained five Eider eggs only plus Eider down. Gulls renested in this, their original site, and laid three eggs. See plate 133.

6th May, Lesser Black-backed Gull nest contained one Eider egg; 7th May, nest now contained one gull and two Eider eggs; 8th May, Eider sat on nest; 12th May, Eider no longer on nest, which contained five Eider eggs, and did not return; 23rd May, Lesser Black-backed Gull had renested on same site and its nest contained two gull eggs; 25th May, gull nest now had three gull eggs.

Nest 6 Eider took over Herring Gull nest and laid at least two eggs. Nest destroyed before eggs could hatch.

5th May, Eider seen on Herring Gull nest; 6th May, nest had one Eider egg; 7th May, two Eider eggs; 15th May, nest had been destroyed.

NESTS NOT TAKEN OVER BY EIDER

Nest 7 Lesser Black-backed Gulls from Nest 2 renested and after ten days their nest contained two Eider eggs. Gulls then laid one egg and hatched two Eider ducklings and then their own chick. The gull chick survived. See plates 134-136.

8th May, Lesser Black-backed Gulls had renested about 50cm from the Eider which took over their original nest; 18th May, gull nest contained one gull egg and two Eider eggs; 12th June, gull nest contained one Eider duckling, one pipping Eider egg and one gull egg; 13th June, both Eider eggs had hatched; 11th June, only one duckling seen, and gull chick had hatched; 15th June, neither duckling seen.

Nest 8 Nest contained one pipping Eider egg and three gull eggs, incubated by gulls. Outcome and gull species unknown.

Observation on 17th June.

Nest 9 Nest incubated by Herring Gulls contained one Eider egg and three gull eggs. Only gull chicks hatched.

19th May, Herring Gull nest seen with one Eider egg and two gull eggs; 9th June, gull nest contained two gull chicks and the Eider egg.

Nest 10 Nest, incubated by gulls, contained an Eider duckling. (Not a personal observation: outcome and other details unknown.)

Nest 11 Nest incubated by Herring Gulls contained two gull eggs and two Eider eggs. Eventually, nest contained only gull eggs.

15th May, Herring Gull nest seen with one gull egg and two Eider eggs; 17th May, two gull eggs and two Eider eggs; 23rd May, nest no longer contained any Eider eggs.

Nest 12 Lesser Black-backed Gull nest contained one Eider egg which then disappeared. Gulls later laid at least one egg.

8th May, Lesser Black-backed Gull nest contained one Eider egg; 9th May, Eider egg no longer in nest; 13th May, nest contained one gull egg.

two Eider eggs (Nest 7). A month later, the gulls hatched two Eider ducklings (plate 135). The ducklings were imprinted on their foster parents and were brooded by them on the nest (plate 136). The ducklings often left the nest to wander under the adjacent bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* but probably found little, if any, food. I did not see whether the gulls attempted to feed the ducklings. After two days, I no longer saw the ducklings. In the meantime, the gull egg had hatched and the chick was then looked after by its parents. The Eider which ousted these gulls from their first nest had



135. Nest of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* containing two Eider *Somateria mollissima* ducklings which were hatched by the gulls, as well as one gull egg (Nest 7, table 1); see also plates 134 and 136 (Philip Perry)



136. Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* with one of the two Eider *Somateria mollissima* ducklings that it hatched (Nest 7, table 1); see also plates 134 and 135 (Philip Perry)

hatched her ducklings a fortnight before, indicating that the eggs laid in the gull's second nest were from a second Eider (Nest 2). I saw no instances of an Eider hatching a gull egg.

Discussion

Eiders probably obtain an extra degree of protection for their eggs from the gulls whose nests they have taken over. Nest-stealing may also increase the

number of suitable sites available, as well as reducing the amount of nest-building required. It is possible that the Eider which did not complete the take-over of a gull nest deserted during the take-over period. An alternative is that the Eiders were brood parasites that had failed to choose a duck nest.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank N. J. Ball, M. A. Ball and M. Thom.

Summary

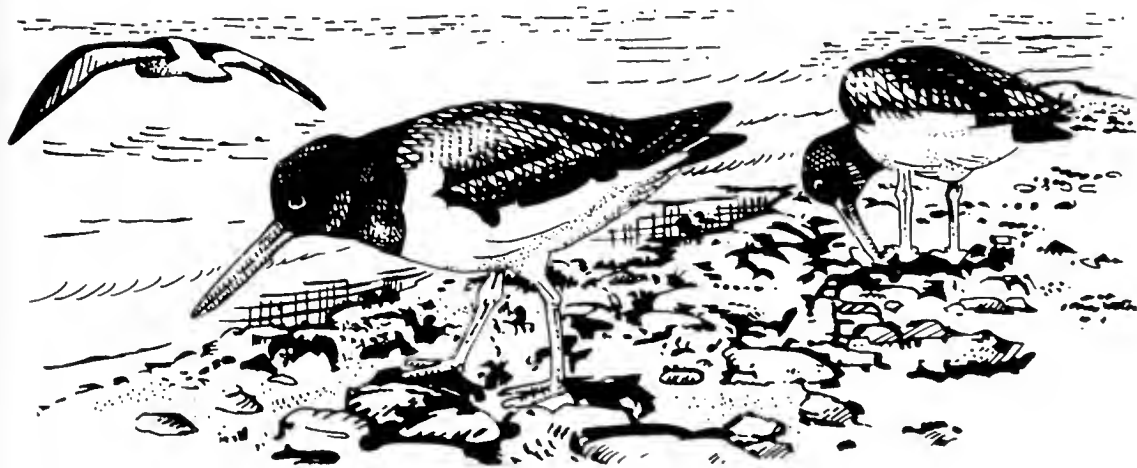
Observations were made on nest-stealing by Eiders *Somateria mollissima* in a colony of Herring *Larus argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*.

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Effect of disease on social hierarchy of young Oystercatchers



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Social hierarchy

During a study of the population of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* on Skokholm Island, Dyfed (Safriel 1967), it was found that a clear-cut social hierarchy existed within each brood. The dominant young (the 'a' young) was always the first to obtain food from the parent. Only when the dominant young was replete could the subordinate chick obtain food. In

broods of three young, this social hierarchy was linear, namely, *a* dominated *b* and *c*, and *b* dominated *c*.

Note that though young Oystercatchers are fully precocial, they are totally dependent upon their parents for food. Also, on Skokholm, the main source of mortality of young is predation by gulls (mainly Herring *Larus argentatus*, but also Great Black-backed *L. marinus* and Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus*). Subordinate young were on average lighter than dominant young, and they often behaved rather ‘carelessly’, so were more likely to be taken by gulls than were their dominant siblings. Indeed, in 1965 and 1966, when the fate of ten broods (two-young broods, each young of known social rank) was carefully followed, it was found (table 1) that *a* young survived to fledging better than *b* young (though, possibly due to the small size of the sample, statistical significance did not quite reach the 5% level, $P = 0.065$, ‘Fisher’s exact’ one-tailed test).

Table 1. Social rank and survival of young Oystercatchers’ *Haematopus ostralegus* on Skokholm, Dyfed, in 1965 and 1966

Figures stand for number of young

	Social rank	
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>
Fledged	9	5
Did not fledge	1	5

The disease

Harris (1965) described a viral disease (‘puffinosis’) of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* on Skokholm, and noted similar symptoms among young Oystercatchers there. The symptoms were blisters on various parts of the feet, which impaired movement. Partial paralysis usually followed, and, in most cases detected in 1965 and 1966, infected young eventually died, though some recovered and fledged successfully.

The social hierarchy was found to be stable (i.e. *a* dominated *b* throughout the whole period, nearly from hatching and up to fledging) in ten of the 13 broods studied in 1965 and 1966. In the other three broods the social rank of individual young was transposed during the course of their life, and in two of these cases the disease was detected. The disease was also diagnosed in six other broods where rank transposition was not observed, though it might have gone undetected due to long gaps between observations. Furthermore, it was noted that, in all broods free of disease, social hierarchy clearly followed weight hierarchy: from hatching to fledging, dominant young were heavier than their subordinate siblings. Weight differences ranged from 1% at the day of hatching to 38% at the fifth day, but the percentage difference usually diminished towards fledging. In broods affected by the disease, however, weight rank was transposed during the course of their growth.

In those broods with disease where transposition of social rank was not detected, dominant young were always heavier than their siblings at the time of observation, and in most cases also at hatching. In the one case where social rank order was transposed and disease not detected, weight order was also transposed, to correspond with the rank of the social hierarchy.

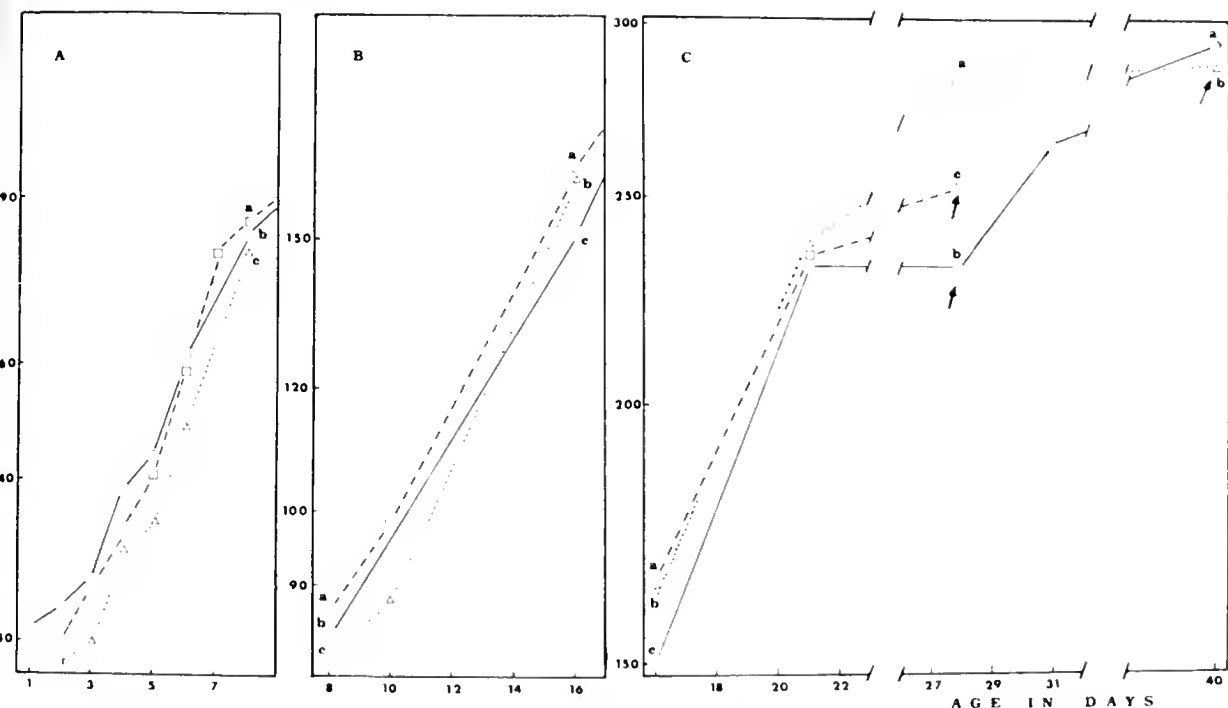


Fig. 1. Weight changes (log. scale) and dominance transpositions within brood of three young Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* ('circle', 'square' and 'triangle') affected by disease. Rank of social hierarchy denoted by *a*, *b* or *c*. Arrows mark time of disease detection. A, period between age 1-8 days; B, period between age 8-16 days; C, period between age 16-41 days

Social hierarchy and growth of broods stricken by disease

Since social hierarchy and weight hierarchy went together, the question arises: what determines what? An answer emerges from the examination of events in the two broods where disease as well as transposition of both dominance and weight ranks occurred.

The growth of a brood of three, 'circle', 'square' and 'triangle', is shown in fig. 1. Their weight hierarchy at hatching suggests that in social hierarchy they ranked *a*, *b* and *c*, respectively. But, between days 6 and 7, the weight rank of 'circle' and 'square' was transposed, and on day 8 the social rank of 'circle' was determined in a lengthy observation as *b*. Throughout this period, 'triangle' remained in the *c* position and was always the lightest young (fig. 1A). But, by day 16, 'triangle' climbed to the *b* position, exchanging hierarchy with 'circle'; their weight rank was transposed between days 10 and 16. 'Square' maintained its *a* position and weight supremacy during this period (fig. 1B), but it dropped to *c* position by day 27, when it developed advanced symptoms of the disease. Its former *a* position was taken by 'triangle'; they exchanged weight order between days 16 and 21 (fig. 1C). The crucial event is the movement of 'circle', by day 28, from the *c* to the *b* position, while its weight was then lower than that of the *c* young. 'Circle' showed advanced symptoms of disease at day 28, but it later fully recovered, to climb up to the *a* position, whereas 'square' died of the disease between days 30 and 32. Finally, when 'circle' gained its *a* position, 'triangle' descended to *b*, showing symptoms of the disease; but it, too, later recovered, and both fledged.

The fact that on day 28 *c* was heavier than *b*, both then being ill, but *c* soon dying whereas *b* recovered, hints that, already on the 28th day, the recovery



137. Two portable hides within territory of pair of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* on Skokholm, Dyfed. Hides used alternately or moved to follow movements of individually marked young; observations enabled social rank of all young to be determined (*Uriel N. Safriel*) of 'circle' was underway and this affected its dominance; its accelerated gain in weight came only later. Thus, the vagaries of 'circle', descending from *a* to *b* to *c* and then ascending back from *c* to *b* to *a*, seem to have been caused by the course of its disease. This had affected its behaviour well before external somatic symptoms were detected; later behavioural recovery preceded the complete disappearance of somatic symptoms. The changes in behaviour presumably caused the transposition of rank, and the rank determined feeding success, hence weight. This interpretation is further reinforced by events in another brood of two in which the social rank

138. Eggs and first-hatched young Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* in nest, Skokholm, Dyfed, June 1966. On Skokholm, hatching intervals are about eight hours, and first-hatched young usually becomes dominant in social hierarchy (*Uriel N. Safriel*)



was transposed in day 25, yet the *a* young remained heavier than *b*; a close examination of the dominant chick showed up very-early—and hardly detectable—symptoms of the disease.

Discussion: behaviour and social hierarchy

The analysis of the events just described supports the assertion that the behaviour of siblings determines their social rank. Once the hierarchy is established, low-ranked young are likely to obtain less food than higher-ranked siblings, if food is scarce. Consequently, they then become lighter, or their initial weight-inferiority (determined by variations in egg-weights at hatching) is reinforced.

It should be noted that the social hierarchy among Oystercatcher siblings is basically non-aggressive. The mere emergence of the dominant chick from its hiding, when a food-carrying parent arrived at the territory, was sufficient to drive subordinate young back to their shelter. Threat postures were, however, frequently exchanged between siblings of all ages, and it is plausible that the authority of the dominant young must be constantly maintained and displayed through a characteristic behaviour. In many birds, 'changes in dominance occur with failing or improving health' (Crook 1964), and it is likely that, within the Oystercatcher brood, each chick always examines the behaviour of its siblings, and is constantly alert to detect minute behavioural changes that might enable it to improve its social status, and thus to enhance its chances of survival.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

In terms of priority of access to food, brought by the parents, dominance relationships exist between fully precocial sibling Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*. This non-aggressive social hierarchy, studied on Skokholm Island, Dyfed, determines the partition of food between young, and is usually associated with corresponding weight hierarchy. The occurrence of a viral disease in some broods on Skokholm was used to investigate whether weight hierarchy was responsible for or was a consequence of the social hierarchy. The relative timing of observed transpositions of weight rank and of social rank within broods in which young were sequentially stricken by the disease supports the suggestion that social rank is maintained by a typical behaviour, that it determines feeding success, and hence is responsible for the observed weight differences within Oystercatcher broods.

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Report on roving tit flocks project



D. J. Fisher

From August 1980 to February 1981, following requests (*Brit. Birds* 73: 267; *Bird Life* July-August 1980: 40), information on the composition of flocks of tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos* was collected by readers of *British Birds* and members of the Young Ornithologists' Club. In this analysis of the data submitted, the definition of a flock has been taken to be three or more birds, and records of one or two have been omitted. Sightings of flocks in areas which did not clearly fall into one of the three defined habitats (coniferous woodland, deciduous woodland, or hedgerows) have also been excluded. Altogether, 548 tit flocks were recorded, 60 in coniferous woodland, 333 in deciduous woodland and 155 along hedgerows (table 1). There was no great variation in the number of flocks recorded in each habitat through the period; totals in all three showed an increase through the autumn, peaking in November, December and January, and decreasing again in February. The main analyses deal only with the commonest four tit species: Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Great Tit *P. major*, Coal Tit *P. ater*, and Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*. The smaller numbers of Marsh *P. palustris* and Willow Tits *P. montanus*, and other species associated with the flocks, are considered later.

Table 1. Total number of flocks of tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos* recorded in each of three habitats each month, from August 1980 to February 1981

Months	WOODLAND			Totals
	Coniferous	Deciduous	Hedgerows	
August	10	27	27	64
September	14	36	21	71
October	4	39	17	60
November	11	74	27	112
December	13	58	25	96
January	5	69	21	95
February	3	30	17	50
TOTALS	60	333	155	548

Flock size

Flocks ranged in size from the defined minimum of three to 285, this latter extremely large flock being recorded in deciduous woodland in January. The average flock size in deciduous woodland and along hedgerows was

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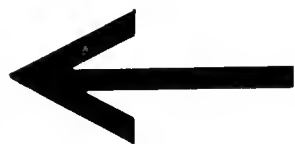
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very similar, as was the group size within the flock for each of the four species (table 2). The flocks in coniferous woodland were on average slightly smaller than those in deciduous woodland and along hedgerows, and they contained smaller groups of Blue and Long-tailed Tits, larger groups of Coal Tits and roughly similar sized groups of Great Tits. There was some monthly variation, but no regular pattern was apparent.

Table 2. Ranges of monthly average (and winter average) flock size and within-flock species-group size for mixed flocks including Blue *Parus caeruleus*, Great *P. major*, Coal *P. ater* and Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus*, in three habitats from August 1980 to February 1981

Flocks and within-flock groups	WOODLAND		
	Coniferous	Deciduous	Hedgerows
Mixed tit flock size	7.0-18.9 (13.3)	10.6-24.1 (15.2)	9.8-19.7 (15.5)
Group size—Blue Tit	3.3-10.4 (6.4)	5.5-14.2 (8.3)	5.7-11.1 (8.1)
Group size—Great Tit	1.0-12.5 (4.1)	2.9- 6.6 (4.6)	3.1- 5.6 (4.5)
Group size—Coal Tit	1.3-16.0 (5.3)	2.0- 4.9 (2.9)	1.0- 5.5 (2.5)
Group size—Long-tailed Tit	2.8-14.5 (5.6)	6.2-17.4 (8.1)	6.5-13.7 (9.5)

Occurrences of species within flocks

Blue and Long-tailed Tits occurred in roughly the same percentage of flocks in each habitat (table 3); Great Tits occurred in the same percentage of flocks in deciduous woodland and along hedgerows, but less frequently in coniferous woodland and, as might be expected, Coal Tits occurred far more frequently in coniferous woodland than in deciduous woodland or along hedgerows. Occurrences of each species within the flocks varied from month to month. The percentage of flocks containing Blue Tits apparently decreased throughout the winter in both coniferous and deciduous woodland (though this statistical decrease could have been caused by other species increasing). The pattern in hedgerows was less clear. The percentage of flocks containing Great Tits in coniferous woodland increased during the autumn, and then decreased again from November onwards. In deciduous woodland, the percentages showed a similar though less well-marked pattern, whereas in hedgerows they decreased as the winter progressed. The proportion of flocks containing Coal Tits in coniferous woodland was quite high in the autumn, but decreased from December onwards. In deciduous woodland, the proportion of flocks containing Coal Tits remained roughly the same throughout the period, whereas along hedgerows the proportion increased to a peak in October-November and

Table 3. Percentage of flocks of tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos* containing Blue *P. caeruleus*, Great *P. major*, Coal *P. ater* and Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus*, in each of three habitats during August 1980 to February 1981

Species	WOODLAND		
	Coniferous	Deciduous	Hedgerows
Blue Tit	82	90	83
Great Tit	52	70	68
Coal Tit	62	39	26
Long-tailed Tit	42	35	47

then decreased again. Though the percentage of flocks containing Long-tailed in all three habitats varied from month to month, no clear pattern emerged.

As the percentages for each species increase or decrease depending on increases and decreases in any or all of the other species, it is difficult to pinpoint true variation, so the conclusions are somewhat tenuous. It should also be noted that certain high percentages can be caused by a small sample of flocks (e.g. there were only four flocks recorded in coniferous woodland in October).

Marsh and Willow Tits

It is likely that a proportion of the Marsh and Willow Tits were misidentified. As might be expected, only small groups of Marsh and Willow Tits were recorded. Interestingly, however, all records of Willow Tit were of one or two birds, whereas there were quite a few records of three, four, five and, on one occasion, six Marsh Tits together. There was also one sighting of eight unidentified Marsh or Willow Tits with a flock. Both species showed a marked preference for deciduous woodland, and larger numbers of both species were found in this habitat from November to January. The proportions of flocks containing Marsh or Willow Tits in each habitat varied from month to month, but the data are based on small samples. The preference for deciduous woodland from November to January was still clear, however, and high proportions in August and September along hedgerows suggested a movement from that habitat into deciduous woodland as the autumn progressed.

Other species associated with tit flocks

Percentages of flocks containing species other than tits in each habitat (table 4) showed no significant monthly variation in coniferous woodland or deciduous woodland, but there did seem to be a decrease as the winter progressed in the number of non-tit species associating with the flocks along hedgerows.

A total of 40 non-tit species was recorded with the tit flocks, of which 153 individuals of 11 species were recorded in coniferous woodland, 829 of 28 species in deciduous woodland, and 1,037 of 37 species along hedgerows. In all three habitats, the number of species decreased as the winter progressed (one factor in this would have been the disappearance of summer migrant species). The total number of individuals recorded each month did not vary significantly in coniferous or deciduous woodland, but decreased noticeably along hedgerows. The majority of these species were recorded in only very small numbers, so do not warrant individual analysis or comment. The species most commonly associating with tit flocks was Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, which occurred in 33% of the flocks in coniferous woodland, and in only a slightly smaller number of flocks in deciduous woodland and along hedgerows. Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* were also recorded with tit flocks, most frequently, as might be expected, in deciduous woodland (24%). Nuthatches *Sitta europaea* were also associated with flocks in deciduous woodland (18.6%). The only other species to associate in any

Table 4. Percentage of flocks of tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos* containing each non-tit species in each habitat during August 1980 to February 1981

Species	WOODLAND		
	Coniferous	Deciduous	Hedgerows
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>			0.6
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>			0.6
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>D. minor</i>	1.7	0.6	1.3
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>			2.6
Meadow Pipit <i>A. pratensis</i>		0.3	1.3
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>			1.3
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		1.5	5.8
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>		0.3	9.7
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		1.2	7.1
Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			3.2
Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			0.6
Stonechat <i>S. torquata</i>			0.6
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>			0.6
Song Thrush <i>T. philomelos</i>		0.3	
Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>		0.3	
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>		0.6	4.5
Whitethroat <i>S. communis</i>		0.3	3.9
Garden Warbler <i>S. borin</i>	1.7	0.6	1.9
Blackcap <i>S. atricapilla</i>		2.1	9.0
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		0.3	
Chiffchaff <i>P. collybita</i>		0.9	9.7
Willow Warbler <i>P. trochilus</i>	8.3	3.9	10.3
Chiffchaff or Willow Warbler	3.3	2.1	3.9
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	33.3	28.8	23.2
Firecrest <i>R. ignicapillus</i>		0.3	1.9
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>		0.9	5.8
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		0.3	
Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	3.3	18.6	7.7
Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	18.3	24.3	18.1
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>			0.6
Tree Sparrow <i>P. montanus</i>		0.6	0.6
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	13.3	12.0	13.5
Brambling <i>F. montifringilla</i>		0.9	1.3
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>		0.6	1.3
Goldfinch <i>C. carduelis</i>		0.6	4.5
Siskin <i>C. spinus</i>	1.7	0.6	3.9
Linnet <i>C. cannabina</i>	1.7		2.6
Redpoll <i>C. flammea</i>	3.3	0.6	5.8
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			3.8
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			1.9
Reed Bunting <i>E. schoeniclus</i>			3.2

significant way with the tit flocks was the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, which occurred in very similar proportions in each of the habitats (12.0-13.5%).

Discussion

The habit of various species of tits to join together in flocks has been known for many years, but little detailed study seems to have been made of it. Perrins (1975) suggested that flocking has two advantages for the birds involved. First, there is a better chance of detecting a predator in a group where all the individuals are on the look out; secondly, the chances of

finding food are increased in a flock, since some individuals may know of good feeding areas.

The results of the project show that most species of tit prefer to feed in deciduous woodland or along hedgerows, where food items are presumably more abundant and more varied. Coal Tits were present in larger numbers in coniferous woodland, although significant numbers were also present in the other two habitats, particularly later in the winter.

The difference in group size between Marsh and Willow Tits is less easy to explain. Morley (1953) stated that Marsh Tits not holding winter territories will join up with mixed species flocks, and after August will travel together without aggression, whilst those holding a winter territory will join up with the flock only whilst it is passing through that territory. The small numbers of Willow Tits perhaps suggest that this species is more aggressive and less tolerant of other members of its own species in a flock, though, as Perrins (1975) stated that Willow Tits are usually thinly scattered even where they occur abundantly, the explanation may be simply a matter of distribution.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to the many observers who recorded and submitted counts of tit flocks during the project: R. Arthur, Mr Ash, S. Banks, A. L. Booth, P. Bowyer, K. B. Briggs, B. Brough, E. D. Cameron, J. Chatfield, N. Coleman, N. Dummigan, G. E. Dummore, M. Elliot, N. Ellis, T. Gittings, H. D. Green, G. H. Gush, T. G. B. Hackston, C. A. Harbard, A. Hall, S. Halton, P. Heath, S. W. Hill, D. Howard, D. C. Lamb, R. Lamb, A. J. Last, K. V. Lloyd, C. D. Lowmass, R. McClellan, Mrs J. M. Malcolm, A. Malone, A. Paine, M. T. Patterson, M. F. Peers, Ms A. Pialkus, G. D. Pinches, Miss J. E. Potts, R. Quinan, S. Randolph, N. Richards, R. Riddington, J. Ridgewell, K. D. Robertson, M. J. Rogers, R. Sanderson, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Miss L. W. Sharrock, J. K. C. Sharrock, B. T. Shaw, W. H. Tucker, E. Varney, D. G. Walker, P. A. Whittington and R. Yeoman Walker.

Thanks are also due to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Peter Holden for setting up the project, and to Dr C. M. Perrins for helpful advice in the planning and on an early draft of the manuscript.

Summary

Results of a joint *British Birds* and YOC project concerning roving flocks of tits *Parus* & *Aegithalos* during winter 1980/81 are presented and the trends are summarised. No unexpected patterns were found, though it is concluded that further study of Willow Tits *P. montanus* might prove worthwhile.

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D. J. Fisher, 56 Western Way, Sandy, Bedfordshire

Seventy-five years ago...

'EVERYONE who takes an interest in the birds of this country will have the greatest satisfaction in learning that the Ruff, so long lost to Norfolk as a breeding bird, has once more nested in the county.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 65, August 1907)

Mystery photographs

68 The diffuse head markings on the gliding gull in last month's mystery photograph are clearly those of one of the hooded species in winter plumage. The massive Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaeus* is instantly ruled out at least by the much too gentle head-structure. The only other hooded species are small or medium-sized, in which case



the all-white tail indicates a second-year or adult. In these plumages, Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* is the only one which, like the mystery bird, lacks any obvious white on the outermost primaries. Perhaps the most similar gull is Franklin's *L. pipixcan*, but that species has obvious white primary tips in first-summer and subsequent plumages, as well as much more black on the head, forming a 'half hood' in winter. The identification as Laughing Gull is confirmed by the all-dark bill and legs (actually blackish or dull brown), the rather large size of the former, the broad white trailing edge to the inner wing, and the dark grey inner upperwing (the tone can just be glimpsed on the far wing); the clear white underparts show this to be an adult (a second-winter would have grey cloudings on the breast-sides and flanks, and the majority have traces of a tail band). It was photographed by David Tomlinson in the USA in January 1982.

139. Mystery photograph 69. Identify the species. Answer next month



Some members of the Rarities Committee consider that third-winter or adult winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* of the west European race *graellsii* are a possible pitfall where claims of second-winter or adult winter Laughing Gulls are concerned. Accepted records normally involve only those individuals which are seen well enough for a convincing size-assessment to be made and for details of head pattern and bare-part colours to be firmly noted.

PJG

Notes



Nest-site provision experiment for Long-eared Owls To attempt to improve the breeding success of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus*, artificial nest-sites were provided in an area where the owls were known to overwinter. The nests provided consisted of two types: old potato or apple-picker baskets made of willow, with the handles removed, and baskets of a similar shape made of wire-netting.

Three willow baskets and six wire baskets were sited in November 1979, in a small Cambridgeshire wood of mixed deciduous trees, comprising mainly willow *Salix*, silver birch *Betula*, oak *Quercus* and hawthorn *Crataegus*. All the baskets were fixed to suitable trees at a height of approximately 5m, and then each lined with sticks of various lengths and thicknesses to provide a firm base.

140. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* on nest in willow basket provided as artificial nest-site, Cambridgeshire, May 1981 (*D. J. Garner*)



During the first year, 1980, none of the baskets was used, but in 1981 one of the willow baskets was occupied by a pair of Long-eared Owls (plate 140), which had a clutch of three eggs, of which two hatched, and two young fledged. Current literature states that Long-eared Owls nest in the same area each year, but not in the same nest. This is probably due to the fact that natural sites (e.g. old birds' nests and squirrels' dreys) are destroyed over winter and do not last for a further year. With this experiment using these more substantial nests, it is hoped that the same site will be used in succeeding years.

D. J. GARNER

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Nightjar taking water in flight So far as I am aware, there are no published records of the Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* taking water, but observations in Sudan suggest that water may be taken in flight. Just after sunset on 2nd November 1977, I saw a late migrant Nightjar leave some bushy vegetation bordering the Blue Nile near Khartoum and fly down to a few centimetres above the river; it then flew parallel to the bank and, as it passed me at 3-4m, lifted its tail and wings a little above the body level and dipped its head so that its bill scooped the water momentarily, rippling the surface, in a manner similar to that employed by hirundines or swifts *Apus* taking water on the wing; it continued over the water as though to repeat the action, but unfortunately passed behind some vegetation out of sight before doing so. Very few nightjars have been recorded taking water, presumably because exceptional conditions are required for such observations. All refer to water being taken in flight. Published reports include: the Golden Nightjar *C. eximius* in the Sudan (*Ibis* (1902): 1-33); the Egyptian Nightjar *C. aegyptius* in Turkestan (Dementiev & Gladkov, 1966, *Birds of the Soviet Union*, vol. 1); and the Allied Nightjar *C. affinis* of Pakistan and India (Ali & Ripley, 1970, *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, vol. 4). In addition, I have seen the Long-tailed Nightjar *C. climacturus* taking water in flight at Khartoum, although in a manner somewhat different from that described above.

ANTONY PETTET

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Swift persistently attacking Starling On 7th September 1979, while watching a group of five Swifts *Apus apus* above Narborough Park, near Leicester, I saw one suddenly and persistently attack a passing Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. The attacks came from behind and below, often making contact with the Starling's belly and vent. The vigour, speed and timing of the 15 or 16 approach pursuits were remarkable and often appeared to treble the flight speed of the Starling, which, even though it jinked and circled, could not evade its pursuer. The attacks ceased when the Starling took refuge in a nearby tree.

DAVID NOAKES

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Observations at Lesser Spotted Woodpecker's nest Between 17.26 and 20.26 GMT on 16th June 1979, near Byfield, Northamptonshire, we watched a nest of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos minor*. We recorded the number and duration of visits, and removal of faecal material, by the adults; the number of times each adult put its head into the nest-hole on each visit was also recorded, since this might indicate the amount of food brought to the nest. The male visited more frequently (31 out of 46 visits), and put his head in the hole more often on each visit (male mean 7.2, female mean 5.0; Mann-Whitney U-test, $P < 0.05$), but the length of feeding visits did not differ significantly between sexes (male mean 5.2 seconds, female mean 5.0; $P < 0.05$). When we ended our watch, the male had remained in the nest for 20 minutes (previous longest period, 34 seconds), so we wonder if the male's habit of incubating at night before the eggs hatch (Bannerman 1955) is continued after hatching. Of 20 faecal pellets removed, the male disposed of 18, 12 of these in a concentrated bout before entering the nest for the final time. This nest-sanitation behaviour resembles that of the Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major*: largely by the male (Steinfatt 1937), at the end of the day (Blair & Tucker 1941). Faeces were not dropped directly from the hole as reported by Blair & Tucker (1941), but were carried to nearby trees and either dropped or wiped off there. This, too, is as reported for Great Spotted Woodpeckers (Owen 1925), but contrasts with the behaviour of the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, where a parent (usually the female) swallows the faeces (Owen 1922). The observed predominance of the male Lesser Spotted in nest-sanitation recalls Carlson & Carlson's (1978) record of a male of that species removing a dead nestling from a nest.

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Abnormal Sand Martin in Essex At about 07.00 GMT on 30th June 1979, at the Naze Public Open Space, Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, I watched about a dozen Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* skimming low over the reserve scrape ponds, a few hundred metres from a breeding colony. One martin seemed to possess two tails: one was quite normal for the species, but the other appeared to grow out from the undertail-coverts, as long again as the normal tail and made up of wispy translucent feathers in a graduated form. The feather shafts could be clearly seen as they flopped about in flight, although they did not inhibit it in any way. A young birdwatcher confirmed what I had seen, and we both watched the bird for about 15 minutes down to about 20m. Eight days later, John Fitzpatrick saw this, or a similar bird,

at William Girling Reservoir, approximately 112km southwest of Walton-on-the-Naze (see below).

JOHN K. WESTON

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On 8th July 1979, while watching a flock of Sand Martins near William Girling Reservoir, Chingford, Essex, I noticed one with an abnormal growth of white feathering extending from its underparts in a streamer to approximately 30mm beyond the end of its tail. When observed from below at close range, care was taken to note that the white feathering was not a foreign object attached to the belly: no sign of a break or join to indicate the presence of some sticky substance could be seen. I watched the martin for half an hour, during which time it entered a nesting hole containing two young. It was not seen again on two subsequent visits.

J. FITZPATRICK

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In our opinion, caution should be exercised; we consider that it would be almost impossible to be absolutely certain of the nature of the extra feathering without examination in the hand.
EDS

Swallows feeding on rising ants In extremely hot weather on 29th August 1979, on the River Ribble at Brungerley Bridge, near Clitheroe, Lancashire, I observed a group of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* behaving in a manner new to me. Ants *Lasius alienus* were emerging from their nests and soaring upwards on their nuptial flights, where a host of birds including Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, Swallows and House Martins *Delichon urbica* waited for them. About 10m from where I was lying, five Swallows seemed to be squatting on the ground close to where the ants were emerging and taking the insects before they became airborne; they made no movements that could be interpreted as 'anting'. A further three Swallows were perched in a willow tree *Salix* full of rising ants.

RON FREETHY

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House Martin feeding young Sand Martins On 6th September 1979, while counting young Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* at the nesting holes at Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, I saw a House Martin *Delichon urbica* land at the entrance to one of the holes where two young Sand Martins were sitting. The young started begging for food, but the House Martin flew off; I watched it hawk around the cliffs for three or four minutes before it returned to the same hole; when the young Sand Martins again started begging, it fed one of them. The House Martin returned to the same hole on six occasions during 15 minutes, and each time it fed one of the young. When it was hawking around the cliffs, adult Sand Martins appeared to mob it, uttering alarm calls similar to those used when Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* were near the colony. I did not see the behaviour repeated on later visits.

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House Martins nesting under lamps In August 1978, at Levington, Suffolk, a colony of House Martins *Delichon urbica* was discovered under circular lamp column shades. A total of 57 nests was built under 12 shades, with a maximum under any one column of seven and a minimum of three. The lights were switched off each evening at 21.30 GMT. In 1979, 53 nests were constructed under the same 12 columns (plates 141-143).

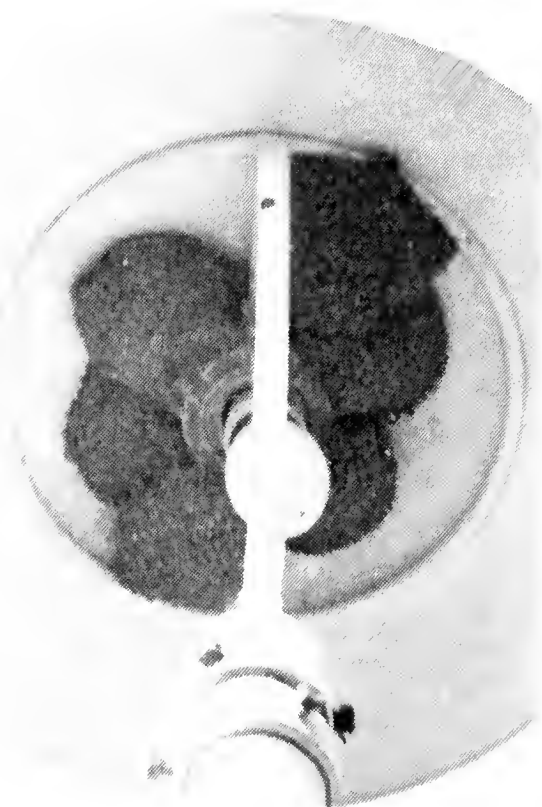
P. W. MURPHY

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Although House Martins use all sorts of nest sites and we therefore do not normally publish notes on them, this site seems particularly unusual and worth recording. Eds



141-143. Nests constructed by House Martins *Delichon urbica* under lamp shades, Suffolk, summer 1979 (M. J. F. *Jeanes*)



Identification of Blyth's Pipit On 9th and 10th May 1981, we saw two migrant Blyth's Pipits *Anthus godlewskii* at a height of 5,500m in the Sagarmartha National Park in Nepal. We hope that even this limited experience will help to clarify the confusion which exists concerning the separation of this species from other large pipits: in our opinion, it is a distinctive species.

Both of those that we saw resembled Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* and bore no resemblance to Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* of the race which occurs in Britain, *richardi*. They were similar in size and structure to Tawny Pipit, being smaller and appearing shorter-tailed than *richardi*, with relatively shorter legs and weaker bills. Even their general coloration was similar to Tawny: sandy upperparts, much paler than on *richardi*, with lighter streaking above. They also lacked the dark central tail feathers and the bold, contrasting head and breast markings of *richardi*.

Basically, they differed from Tawny in three ways. First, both individuals had very extensive orange-buff flanks, vent and undertail-coverts and, at a distance, appeared to have wholly orange-buff underparts; the buff flanks of *richardi* are variable in extent, but are unlikely ever to be as rich or as extensive as on Blyth's. Secondly, they lacked the well-defined supercilia, and consequently appeared very 'plain-faced', whereas the other two large pipits have clear and well-defined supercilia. Thirdly, the only call heard was a most distinctive, sharp, but unemphatic and rather gentle, monosyllabic 'choop', unlike the call of any other pipit that we have heard before. Blyth's Pipit clearly has a wider vocabulary, but, since our birds were on passage, it is probable that this would be the call heard from vagrants in the west Palearctic.

There were three further helpful plumage features. First, the strength of the mantle streaking appeared intermediate between Tawny and *richardi*. Secondly, the neat gorget composed of fine streaking across the breast was regular and more confined than that of juvenile (and some first-winter) Tawny Pipits and lighter than the upper breast streaking of *richardi*. Thirdly, our birds, like most of A. R. Kitson's in Mongolia (*Brit. Birds* 72: 96), showed whitish fringes to the median coverts rather than the creamy or buff fringes shown by *richardi*, though, as Kitson stated, this may not be a very conclusive feature. The centres of the median coverts were, like those of *richardi*, not quite so dark and outstanding as those of Tawny Pipit.

To summarise, we stress that there should normally be no confusion between Blyth's Pipit and Richard's Pipit of the race *richardi*; excusable confusion could, however, arise with Tawny Pipit. An individual occurring in this country seemingly intermediate between Tawny and Richard's Pipits is likely to be a variant of one of those species rather than a Blyth's Pipit, which at first glance should recall Tawny Pipit until the distinguishing features are observed.

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S. C. Madge has commented: 'An examination of skins has shown that the colour of the fringes of the median coverts is variable in Blyth's Pipits, some having warm buff fringes, others whitish. On those with whitish fringes, however, the contrast with the warm buff fringes of the greater coverts, and indeed the warm buff underparts, is quite marked.' Eds

Tree Pipit displaying from ground On 12th May 1979, at Clapdale, North Yorkshire, a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* flew up from a perch about 30cm from the ground to a height about that of the tree tops and began to sing, parachuting downwards in the normal way. It landed on the ground among the trees and immediately began another song-flight, again reaching the canopy before starting to sing. This was repeated three more times in succession. *The Handbook* mentions only that the song-flight takes place from an elevated branch of a tree.

LAURENCE N. ROSE

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We regard this behaviour as fairly normal, but, owing to an apparent lack of records in the literature, believe it worth publishing here. Eds

Dunnock stimulated by train to sing at night At about 22.30 GMT on 18th June 1979, at Radlett, Hertfordshire, I heard a full song given once by a Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, this coinciding with the passing of a diesel train. The house windows were open and, although the sound of the train at 100m was relatively deafening, the song was clearly audible only 10m away. At about 00.30 GMT, and again at 23.30 hours, on 20th June, a Dunnock sang twice, each time coinciding with a passing train. No other outside factor was involved, and it appeared that the Dunnock was stimulated to sing by the train. Although many birds are stimulated to sing by sudden, loud noises, it is interesting that this should have happened at night.

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Migrant Ring Ouzels assuming temporary territories On the evening of 19th April 1979, on the edge of a small moor in West Yorkshire, I observed two male Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* chasing each other to and fro along a wall. They frequently came into contact and once fluttered up together to a height of 1m; they quarrelled noisily for 15 minutes, before one flew about 200m downstream. The next evening, in the same respective localities, they sang alternately for the hour that I watched them, and appeared to be holding distinct territories, the boundary being the area of contact on 19th. Two days later, both were absent, and were not seen again. Although some species may stop on migration and become territorial, I know of no reference to Ring Ouzels doing so.

R. P. S. WOLSEY

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Blackbird carrying grass snake On 25th July 1979, at New Hythe, Kent, a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* flew towards me carrying what at first appeared to be a long piece of nesting material; it seemed so engrossed with this that it apparently saw me only at the last moment, when it suddenly swerved aside, uttering its alarm call, and dropped a small grass snake

Natrix natrix in front of me. The snake, about 25 cm long, disappeared swiftly into the undergrowth, apparently unharmed. The Blackbird had been gripping it behind the head and had flown about 30 m at a height of 1½ m. The usual time for the emergence of young grass snakes is late August or early September, but often later (M. Smith, 1951, *The British Amphibians and Reptiles*); the snake I saw must, therefore, have been almost one year old at least, at which age the young snakes are 'between 250 mm and 300 mm in length' (Smith 1951). The Blackbird's catholic tastes have been well documented (e.g. E. Simms, 1978, *British Thrushes*), and there are several records of reptiles as victims (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 71: 131), but the only record I can find of a snake as potential Blackbird prey is that of a Blackbird attacking a small grass snake (*Brit. Birds* 53: 32).

J. M. HYDE

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Yolkless egg of Blackbird and abnormal egg of Song Thrush During 1979, in each of two nests 200 m apart at Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, I found an exceptionally small egg. On 6th June, I discovered the nest of a Blackbird *Turdus merula* containing two one-to-two-day-old chicks and one small egg. Clutch size would, therefore, appear to have been three, although it is possible that an egg may have been lost during incubation. The abnormal egg was 22 mm × 17 mm, but its shape, colour and markings were normal for the species. There was no evidence of nest success (e.g. droppings) on my next visit (30th June). On 7th June, I found the nest of a Song Thrush *T. philomelos* containing two eggs: one normal, the other only 15 mm × 12 mm and rounded equally at both ends, but of normal colour and markings. This nest had either already been, or was subsequently, deserted and no further eggs were laid. On examination, the thrush's egg (a good deal smaller than the Blackbird's) showed some presence of yolk, but the Blackbird's was definitely devoid of yolk. The occurrence of two abnormal eggs so close together may have been a coincidence but it is perhaps more likely that a local environmental factor, such as food supply or chemicals, was responsible. The discoveries took place during a period of exceptionally wet weather.

PAUL DRIVER

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The phenomenon of small eggs is fairly well known, but the absence of yolk in the Blackbird's egg is certainly most odd. EDS

Reed Warbler singing at Magpie and Cuckoo The note on a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* singing at a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 387) recalled the following. On 5th August 1979, at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, a Magpie *Pica pica* flew towards and perched on a bush by a reedbed; at once, a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* started a vigorous burst of song, repeating the bursts as it moved invisibly through the reeds towards the Magpie. After about two minutes, the Magpie flew off and the warbler

became silent. Previously, on 27th May 1978, at the same locality, a male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* perched on a tree overlooking a reedbed; as it landed, a Reed Warbler began to sing and approached, unseen, the base of the tree, where it sang vigorously for two or three minutes, becoming silent as soon as the Cuckoo flew away. On each occasion, the intensity of the warbler's song was characteristic, but no alarm calls were heard.

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These instances, and also perhaps the Dunnock *Prunella modularis* stimulated by a train to sing at night (see above), are probably examples of a normal response by a songbird to disturbance. Eds

Wintering by 'Siberian' Chiffchaff On 23rd January 1980, I discovered a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* feeding in my garden at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The warbler was grey-brown above, pale-breasted, with a buff wash extending from the side down towards the flanks, and a white belly, vent and undertail-coverts. There was no obvious wing-bar and the supercilium was buff. I could detect no trace of yellow in the plumage, so I deduced that it was of the Siberian race *P. c. tristis*, especially as the call-note was loud and quite unlike anything I had heard previously from a Chiffchaff. I saw the bird again on 30th January, on four dates in February, on three dates in March and finally on 7th and 8th April, at distances of 2-15m. It spent most of its time on, or near, the ground, except on the last two dates, when it remained high up in a fruit tree and, in addition to its calls, produced several short bursts of song. This consisted of a 'chiff' note followed by four to six musical notes of varying pitch. This song was audible at considerable distances and was repeated several times on both occasions. Chiffchaffs of the nominate race were present from late March, allowing comparisons of plumage, call and song to be made.

Descriptions of the song of *P. c. tristis* are few, and records of long-staying individuals do not appear to be well-documented. Early references (*Brit. Birds* 10: 263; 11: 215; 44: 94, 358) were summarised by H. G. Alexander (*Brit. Birds* 48: 350) and in *The Handbook* (vol. 2: 7), where a musical song, similar to that described above, is stated to be the spring song of *P. c. tristis*. This song is heard in India, where it is given by wintering Chiffchaffs before their departure in late April, and from the breeding grounds in Siberia.

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S. C. Madge has commented that many of the Chiffchaffs wintering in southwestern England are noticeably brown-and-white, but that they apparently utter a 'hooect' call suggestive of a more western origin than the range of *P. c. tristis*, and are perhaps *P. c. abietinus*. Eds

Spotted Flycatcher attacking red squirrel On 18th June 1979, at Loch Garten, Highland, I was watching a red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* when

suddenly a small bird attacked it from behind and then flew off. A few seconds later, the bird resumed the attack, hitting the squirrel in the tail and driving it up a tree; it attacked again and drove the mammal off. After the final attack, the bird perched in a nearby tree, and I saw that it was a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and that it had some red hairs in its bill. I feel that the flycatcher, rather than attacking the squirrel to drive it from its territory, was in fact collecting nest material.

JEFF HUNT

34 Croft Road, Mortimer, Reading, Berkshire

Long-tailed Tits feeding on scale-insects On 28th January 1979, in Crewkerne, Somerset, I watched a party of Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* feeding on the trunk of a willow *Salix*. On closer inspection, I found the trunk covered, for a metre or so, with the scale-insect *Chionaspis salicis*. Very many of the scales had been smashed, exposing within the purplish-red eggs on which the tits had been feeding. I have not found any reference to Long-tailed Tits feeding on this scale-insect, which I imagine must form an important source of food in winter.

A. J. PARSONS

Barnfield, Tower Hill Road, Crewkerne, Somerset

Penduline Tit in Gwynedd From 5th to 8th May 1981, the weather on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, had been dominated by a shallow low to the southwest, giving light to moderate southerly and southeasterly winds, varying cloud cover and fog patches. This had brought in a variety of common summer migrants, which continued to arrive on 9th May, when the wind turned northeasterly. At about 18.00 GMT on 9th, my assistant, D. Suddaby, rushed into the Observatory clearly excited, saying he had seen a bird that 'must have been' a Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*! I alerted the only other birdwatchers on the island at the time, L. J. Davenport and G. McLardy, and went to Cristin Withy, where the bird had first been found. This is an area of about 60m × 25m of coppiced willow and sallow *Salix*, one of four withy beds on the island, all attractive to migrants, and all used as sites for mist-netting.

The bird was quickly relocated feeding vigorously in the willows at heights from 1.5 to 3m above the ground, the tops of the trees being up to 4m high. It was watched, often at close range, for 15 minutes, then a mist-net was opened and the bird gently edged forward and trapped. It was taken back to the Observatory for ringing, examination and photography, and then released into the garden, another area of willow and plum *Prunus*.



144. Adult male Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Gwynedd, May 1981 (P. J. Roberts)

In the field, it was immediately recognisable as a Penduline Tit: the tit-like size and shape, combined with black face-mask on a greyish head and chestnut-brown upper back, gave no chance of confusion with any other species. In the hand the following details were noted:

UPPERPARTS Crown and nape pale grey. Forehead, lores and ear-coverts black, with some faint chestnut brown tips on forehead and ear-coverts. Mantle a patchy rufous or chestnut brown. Back a more 'washed out' brown, fading into pale grey on rump and uppertail-coverts, the latter having slightly darker centres. Primaries dark grey, the inner primaries edged paler on outer webs. Secondaries same as inner primaries. Tertiaries centred dark grey, but broadly edged dirty pale grey. Primary coverts similar to primaries, but with buff edges. Greater coverts blackish-grey centred, with broad edges of rich chestnut brown. Alula blackish brown, edged buff chestnut. Median and lesser coverts pale rufous or chestnut, similar to mantle colour. Tail feathers all dark greyish-brown, distinctly but thinly edged off-white. **UNDERPARTS** Chin very pale grey. Throat similar to chin, but with very pale chestnut suffusion. Breast, flanks and belly all patchy pale buffy-grey, breast showing suggestion of the brown suffusion noted on throat. Undertail-coverts dirty grey, with buffy-grey centres. Underwing-coverts and axillaries very pale buff-brown. Rest of underwing pale grey. **BARE PARTS** Upper mandible mid-grey, with blackish ridge. Lower mandible pale grey, darker at tip and pinkish at base. Tarsus lead grey. Iris dark brown. **MEASUREMENTS** Wing 54 mm; tarsus 16.5 mm; bill (from feathering) 8.5 mm. Weight 9.5 g.

The Penduline Tit remained in the Observatory garden until 13th May, but, despite there being up to 60 m of mist-net open daily in the course of our usual ringing activities, it was not trapped again. It was also much more difficult to observe in the thicker vegetation, but additional notes were made. Its habits were typically tit-like, sometimes feeding by hanging upside down or leaning over the ends of thin branches. The shape was similar to that of a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, but slightly smaller (as the measurements bear out), with a proportionately longer tail. Most notable, however, was the comparatively long, fine pointed bill. Another feature of the bird in the field was the distinct pale panel on the closed wing, caused by the extensive pale fringes to the inner primaries, secondaries and tertiaries. The call was heard only briefly, and noted as a tit-like nasal 'zee-zee-zee'. In the field, there was a clear demarcation between the pale grey of the nape and the chestnut brown of the mantle. The pale chestnut suffusion of the throat and upper breast was hardly apparent, however, and faded and merged into the paler lower breast and belly. In the hand, this could be seen to be caused by fairly extensive pale tips to slightly rufous brown feathers. The bird was aged and sexed as adult male due to extent of black face-mask.

Despite the news of the bird's arrival becoming known on the mainland shortly afterwards, weather and lack of boats prevented a few keen and hopeful observers getting to the island to see it. This was the fourth record for Britain and Ireland, the others being singles at Spurn, Humberside, on 22nd-28th October 1966, in the Isles of Scilly on 25th October 1977 and at Stodmarsh, Kent, on 18th May 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 60: 517-520; 72: 483-484; 74: 488). Only about a dozen people saw the first bird, and the subsequent two were both single-observer records; thus, only a handful of people have yet seen this species in the British Isles. The Bardsey bird was the first to be ringed in Great Britain.

P. J. ROBERTS

Bardsey Bird Observatory, Aberdaron, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 8DE

Carrion Crow taking insect prey on the wing On the warm, sunny morning of 30th September 1980, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, I noticed a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* on the ground. Suddenly, it took flight to chase an insect which I identified as a large bee *Bombus*. After a twisting pursuit of about five seconds, it caught and immediately swallowed the insect. Although *The Handbook* mentions Hymenoptera as food taken by the crow family, there is no specific reference to bees, and, in any case, it seems likely that they would normally be taken on the ground. I found it surprising that the crow had the agility and technique to catch such prey in flight.

M. J. ROGERS

195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP

Letter

Tail-wagging by wheatears While the pronounced tail-wagging of the Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellinus* is a 'helpful pointer' towards identification (*Brit. Birds* 74: 443), this habit is also typical of the—admittedly smaller and daintier—Desert Wheatear *O. deserti*, the immatures and females of which are superficially like Isabelline. I see these species almost daily between September and April.

GRAHAM BUNDY

c/PO Box 98, BAC Ltd, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Announcements

Free badge offer Fly your own juvenile Sabine's Gull on this button-badge issued to mark the publication of Peter Grant's new book *Gulls—a guide to identification*. To obtain your free badge (available only to *British Birds* readers) send a self-addressed and stamped envelope to Peter Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.



Circulation and distribution changes We have now acquired a small home-computer to store and print subscribers' names and addresses. In due course, we hope that this will result in speedier inclusion both of new subscribers and of changes of addresses of existing subscribers, and more clearly printed labels than our existing methods of hand-sorting and laborious address-printing. The change-over from the old to the new system (due during June and July) may, however, result in some errors or omissions, and we hope that subscribers who experience troubles will be understanding. All queries and complaints (or praise!) should still be directed to Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

'The RSPB Book of British Birds' This new basic guide, superbly illustrated by Hilary Burn and with text by Peter Holden with Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, is aimed primarily at both adult and young birdwatching beginners. The paintings show each species in its usual British habitat, while the text aims to interest the reader and to include facts about behaviour, diet and so on, as well as identification (which is separated in a special section under each species). The 272 species covered are those likely to be seen during the first few years of ordinary birdwatching in Britain (unlike many 'birdbooks for beginners', it does not include Black Woodpecker or Crested Lark!).

The RSPB Book of British Birds

Peter Holden • Tim Sharrock

Illustrated by Hilary Burn



The full price will be £5.95, but up to 31st December 1982 *British Birds* readers can obtain it post free through British BirdShop (page viii) for £4.95 (add 50p if outside UK & Eire). Why not buy one as a Christmas present? It will be published on 21st October, and all advance orders will be despatched immediately.

Request

Binoculars and telescopes survey Our previous summary of readers' usage and opinions of binoculars and telescopes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439) provided much interesting information, but is perhaps now somewhat out-of-date. In this issue (page v on the back of the subscription form in the centre), therefore, we include a brief questionnaire so that we can bring our review and recommendations up to date. The report on this will appear in October, so, to be included, completed questionnaires must be returned *before 31st August 1982*. Please help us to produce a useful survey by returning this form at once.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

La Albufera de Mallorca Acting on behalf of the International Council for Bird Preservation, Peter Conder spent a month in northern Mallorca examining the Albufera and its disused saltpans before preparing a report on its present international value in, particularly, ornithological and botanical terms. He also recommended various ways in which the marsh could be managed, were it to be acquired by the government, to improve its attraction for birds and tourists alike and to realise its educational potential. At the end of the visit, Peter met the President of the Consell Insular, Señor Alberti, who, after he had received the report, said 'We have destroyed too much of Mallorca—we must now protect it.' This sounds encouraging and we await further news with interest.

Skomer and Skokholm In 1977, rising costs forced the West Wales Naturalists' Trust to stop publishing annual reports on the bird life of these famous islands. The first Skokholm Bird Observatory report had been published as a separate document in 1936 and, apart from the war years, publication was annual until 1973 when the Skomer report was added. After WWNT ceased publication, the islands' wardens produced an annual newsletter. Now we can report that the 'Friends of Skomer and Skokholm' has been formed, under the aegis of the Trust, and that a twice-yearly, duplicated bulletin is

being produced. The most recent issue contains wardens' reports for both islands, lists of birds recorded, comments and reports by visiting naturalists and research workers. The subscription is £5 for a three-year period and further information is available from WWNT, 7 Market Street, Haverfordwest, Dyfed SA61 1NF.

Goshawks again One of the conclusions reached by Mick Marquiss and Ian Newton in their recent paper 'The Goshawk in Britain' (*Brit Birds* 75: 243-259) was that direct human persecution was an important factor in the bird's present numbers and spread—possibly a limiting factor. It is sad to have to provide further evidence of this: by early June 1982, the RSPB already knew of at least ten nests pillaged in four separate areas. Increasing efforts to protect the species in known vulnerable areas have had some effect, but the problem of nest robberies, mainly by outlaw falconers, is not going away.

'Continental Birdlife' disappears We were sad to hear from its editors that, because their 'financial losses and publication delays have both reached intolerable levels', the American journal *Continental Birdlife* has ceased publication after the end of volume 2. At the time of writing, their issues numbers 4, 5 and 6 had not yet been posted, so we do still have something to look forward to. We hope

that this useful journal will reappear in due course.

Cornell change Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology has published its *Newsletter to Members* for many years, often providing interesting transatlantic snippets which we have used here. It now ceases publication, too—but the good news is that it is being replaced by a new, more lavish and comprehensive journal, the *Living Bird Quarterly*. The Laboratory's annual journal *The Living Bird* is among the foremost of its kind, and if the new quarterly matches its high standards it should do well. We will report on the first (July 1982) issue in due course.

Cornwall changes We have already reported (75: 296) the change of recorder for Cornwall. The Cornwall Bird-watching and Preservation Society's Secretary, F. H. C. Kendall (33 Victoria Road, Bude EX23 8RJ), tells us that there has been some further rearrangement of the Society's officers. The Joint Editor, responsible for the Isles of Scilly Report, is M. J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middx TW16 7TP; and the Deputy Editor and Recorder, responsible for the Mainland Report, is R. Smaldon, 46 Briar Road, Hartley, Plymouth, Devon.

Real Snow Geese Is it wild or is it an escape? This question is constantly asked by birdwatchers and county recorders about occurrences of Snow Geese *Anser caerulescens*. My answer has always been that the numbers of full-winged birds in captivity are such that escapes must always be more likely. This includes Ireland and western Scotland, thanks to the presence of a free-flying flock of over 40 of both colour phases on the island of Mull. The first proof of a genuine transatlantic crossing has now come, however, from the Netherlands: a note in *Dutch Birding* (2: 52) reported that a flock of 18 Lesser Snow Geese *A. c. caerulescens* was present in Noord-Holland from 18th to 26th April 1980 and that one was colour-ringed. It proved to have been marked as a gosling at La Perouse Bay on the west side of Hudson Bay, Canada, in the summer of 1977. (Contributed by Malcolm Ogilvie)

Note-taking in the rain How often, on that wet seawatch or drizzling day on the sea wall, has the page of your notebook become soggy and the writing illegible? One solution is now provided by 'AquaScribe', a 160mm × 105mm 'all-weather notebook' with water-

resistant paper. It can be written on with pencil 'even underwater', as it says in the blurb provided by the manufacturers. The notebooks are rather expensive (£3.22 each plus 45p p&p for 30-page notebook with cover and pencil), but refill pads cost only £1.85. If you want to give the AquaScribe a try, write to Hawkins & Manwaring, Westborough, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 5HJ. (JTRS)

New 'Birdwatch' record We have been criticised for giving space to the now annual *Country Life* 'Record Birdwatch', but, in the knowledge that this sort of thing gives pleasure to many people, we make no excuses for reporting the third such event, which took place in East Anglia on 15th May this year. The '150 barrier' was, predictably, passed at last: the *Country Life* team (David Tomlinson, Jeremy Sorensen, Bill Urwin and Peter Smith) made 153 and their rivals, the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society squad (Bill Oddie, John Gooders, Cliff Waller and Ron Johns), scored 152. Over £5,000 was raised for wildlife charities—and we are reliably informed that the teams let pass the chance to add one more species to their lists in the interests of not disturbing a rare breeding bird.

York Weekend Highlights of the Annual Members' Weekend held by the RSPB at York on 26th-28th March 1982 may have been the address by the Duke of Edinburgh and a memorable lecture by Jeffery Boswell—but perhaps Rob Hume's comments on the *BB* Mystery Photograph Competition will be of more interest to our readers. He says '... there were hardly any entries and most of what few there were came from YOC members on the Saturday afternoon. The only correct answers came from two children, Mark and Sharon Wallace (who identified Red-necked Phalarope but could not spell it) and a combined effort from Peter Merrin and Robert Gillmor, who shared the champagne. Well, I wasn't going to bring it back ...'

Derbyshire birds *Where to Watch Birds in Derbyshire* is a useful booklet—aimed at newcomers to birdwatching rather than the more experienced—privately produced by P. Shooter (text and checklist) and N. H. Richardson (illustrations and maps). We can thoroughly recommend it. Copies (price £1 plus 16p postage) are available from N. H. Richardson, 7 Victory Avenue, Ripley, Derbyshire DE5 3EZ.

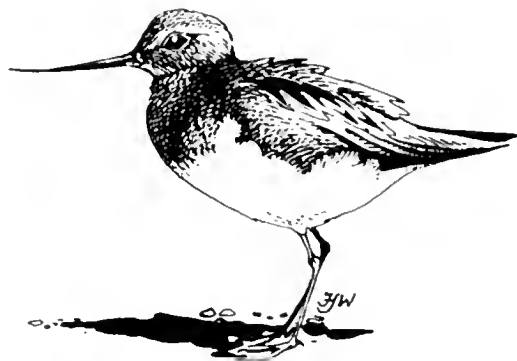
Peaks and Sheffield birds Part of Derbyshire is also covered by *Birdwatching in the Sheffield Area and the Peak District* by David Herringshaw and Roy Frost. This booklet includes masses of general information as well as plenty of gen on where to go and what to look for; it too is recommended. Copies (£2.50 including postage) can be had from David Herringshaw, 303 Bellhouse Road, Sheffield S5 0RD.

Bearded Vulture news 'Notes sur le statut actuel du Gypaète barbu *Gypaetus barbatus* en Europe et autour de la Méditerranée' by Paul Géroutet, plus some more recent information since he prepared those notes for the Corsica meeting on Mediterranean raptors two years ago, give us an up-to-date indication of the species' present status and population trends. Sub-adults, immatures and wandering individuals form an important part of any population of large birds of prey and if we add the estimated numbers of these to the estimated breeding population

we find that the European population numbers 200-300 individuals. There are 74-91 breeding pairs: 38-45 in the Pyrénées (Spain and France), three in southeast Spain, seven to ten in Corsica, 15-20 in 'mainland' Greece, one in Yugoslavia and ten to 12 in Crete. The important Pyrénéan population is stable, as are those in Corsica and Crete, which is very encouraging, but the Greek population is especially threatened, particularly by the continuing practice of laying out poisoned carcasses to kill foxes and wolves. Plans to reintroduce the species in the Alps are going forward, the news up to the end of 1980 being that ten young have been reared in captivity; none has been released so far. News from the other end of the Mediterranean, in Israel, is not so good: neither of the remaining two pairs is nesting in 1982. Incidentally, it is surely high time that we British stopped using the romantic-sounding but very misleading name 'Lammergeier', even if Bearded Vulture is somehow 'wrong' for this magnificent bird.

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to May, unless otherwise stated. An anticyclone in mid Atlantic early in the month brought in cool northerly air with strong winds at times. By 10th, the pattern changed as high pressure built on the Continent and a southerly airstream became established, bringing much warmer weather. As pressure declined to the east, winds turned more westerly by 19th, with cooler unsettled weather. The hot southerlies returned at the end of the month, bringing thundery conditions.

Passerine migrants

The summer visitors were late in arriving,

having to battle against the northerly winds during the first period. Vagrant **Serins** *Serinus serinus*, however, were found along the English south coast at Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 4th, Dungeness (Kent) on 7th and Sandwich Bay (also Kent) on 10th. The arrival of air originating from southern Europe brought with it some exciting birds, the most remarkable being a **Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda* to Midhope Moor (South Yorkshire), found on 15th (plates 145 & 146). The adoption of open heather moorland as a home territory is in keeping with its normal Mediterranean habitat, but its ability to fly long distances has not been



145 & 146. Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*.
South Yorkshire, May 1982 (A. V. Moon)

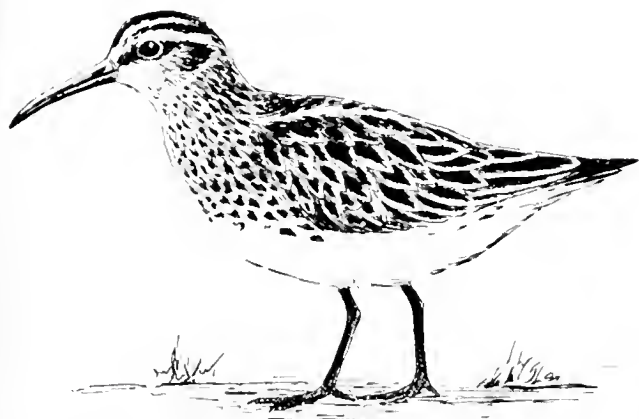


noted previously. Found also on 15th was a **Subalpine Warbler** *S. cantillans* at Styal (Cheshire) and a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* at Prawle Point (Devon), both accepted vagrants from the Mediterranean. Other overshoots were a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at Portbury Wharf (Avon) on 15th, and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* of the Spanish race *iberiae* at

Sandwich Bay on 16th, and displaced northern birds were **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* at Trimley (Suffolk) on 15th and Cley (Norfolk) on 18th, a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* in Shetland, an **Ortolan Bunting** *E. hortulana* at Covenham Reservoir (Lincolnshire) on 20th (plate 147), and **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* at Doncaster (South Yorkshire) on 20th, Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 21st and at Hemel Hempstead (Hertfordshire). Towards the end of the month, further reports were of **Lesser Grey Shrike** at Ringstead (Norfolk) on 24th, another **Serin** at Dungeness on 26th, a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* at East Wretham (Norfolk) on 26th, a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* singing in a birdwatcher's garden in Reading (Berkshire) on 29th, and a **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* at Sandwich Bay on 30th. Yet another remarkable find was a **White-crowned Black**

147. Female Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Lincolnshire, May 1982 (Keith Atkin)





Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* at Benacre (Suffolk) from 2nd to 5th June, a North African desert species and a quite unexpected vagrant.

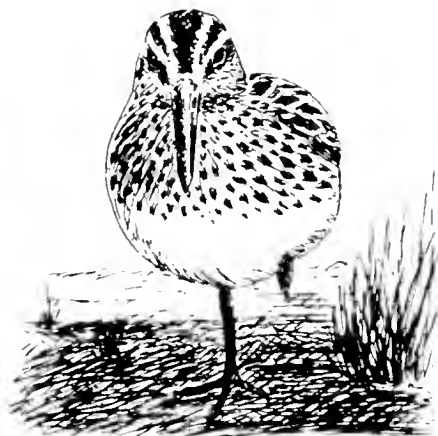
Near-passerines

A further spring record of a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* came from Steart Point (Somerset) from 10th to 13th. Four **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* were reported, at Christchurch (Dorset) on 9th, Cambridge (Cambridgeshire) on 13th, Altrincham (Cheshire) on 16th, and Potters Bar (Hertfordshire) on 19th. **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* records came from Elmley (Kent) on 6th, Dungeness on 4th, Steps Bridge (Devon) on 16th, and Walberswick (Suffolk) on 22nd.

Wildfowl

The usual **Steller's Eiders** *Polysticta stelleri* were reported from the Outer Hebrides on 9th and at Papa Westray (Orkney) from 30th April onwards. Southeastern European ducks seen were **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* at Sandwich Bay on 31st and Elmley on 6th June, and a **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Mickletown (West

148. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Lincolnshire, May 1982 (Keith Atkin)



Yorkshire) on 22nd. An **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was found at Birsay (Orkney) on 3rd and another Nearctic species, a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors*, was at Marshside (Merseyside) on 20th and 21st.

Wading birds

The numbers and variety of wading birds this month were impressive, especially during the periods of southerly winds. **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were found on the River Dovey (Gwynedd) on 1st, at Dunwich (Suffolk) and Sandwich Bay on 24th, a **Crane** *Grus grus* at Rendall (Orkney) on 4th, **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Great Budworth Mere (Cheshire) on 6th and 7th and Kirkwall (Orkney) on 28th, **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* at Dungeness on 27th and Minsmere (Suffolk) on 1st June, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Sandbach Flash (Cheshire) on 16th. A total of 17 reports of **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* all came from the southeast of England. The month was also remarkable for displaced northern wader species. **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* appeared at Cliffe (Kent) on 13th and 14th, at Paulsgrove (Hampshire) on 22nd and 23rd, Hickling (Norfolk) on 25th, Saltfleetby (Lincolnshire) on 26th (plate 148) and at Cley from 26th to 29th. The last locality also reported a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* from 18th to 20th, and up to four **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii*. The latter species was reported also from many inland sites. **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were reported also in good numbers at their inland passage resting-sites, with 42 being the maximum flock on Pendle Hill (Lancashire) on 16th. The five **Kentish Plovers** *C. alexandrinus* records received were all on English southeast coasts. Of the commoner species, **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* were noted passage birds, with 734 at Dungeness on 10th. A few Nearctic waders appeared also, a **Buff-**

breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* at Cley on 15th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* also at Cley on 18th, a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Elmley late in the month, and **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* at Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 18th and at Wath Ings (North Yorkshire) from 24th to 28th (plate 149).

Birds of prey

This month has also been excellent for reports of raptors. Two late-returning **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus*, or the same individual, were reported on 9th at Benacre and at Horsey (Norfolk), **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* visited Dungeness on 8th and Sandwich Bay on 16th, and **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were sighted at Dungeness on 9th, Corris (Gwynedd) on 20th, Sandwich Bay on 24th, and in south Bedfordshire in late May. There were five records of **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* passing through northwest England and a maximum of five was reported at Sandwich Bay. The southeast coastal area of England was visited also by **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus*, with up to three present at Sandwich Bay on 22nd, and others seen at Walberswick on 9th and 22nd, Dungeness on 24th, Horsey on 1st June and Minsmere on 5th June. Vagrant **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus*, however, were the raptors of the month, one at Doncaster staying from 16th into June, with others at Holme (Norfolk) on 5th, Sandwich Bay from 19th onwards, Dungeness on 28th and Faversham (Kent) on 29th.

Seabirds

The strong northwesterlies at the beginning of the month brought **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* inshore at Balranald (Hebrides), with three- and half-hour watches counting 185 on 2nd and 347 on 4th.

149. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, North Yorkshire, May 1982 (J. E. Seviour)



As reported in the previous issue, 21 were blown inshore in the Solway (Cumbria) on 3rd. Later, more were reported in the English Channel, with 68 on 13th at Dungeness being the maximum count. Three single **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* were also reported in Hebridean waters. The same area still held numbers of **Glaucous** *Larus hyperboreus* and **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* and at Balranald a **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* was found on 9th. A spring-plumaged **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* was seen at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 6th June.

Latest news

In early July, three terns made the news: **Elegant** *Sterna elegans* at Greencastle (Co. Down), **Royal** *S. maxima* at Dungeness and **Sooty** *S. fuscata* at Worthing (West Sussex).



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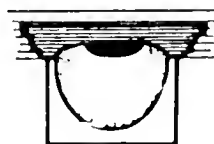
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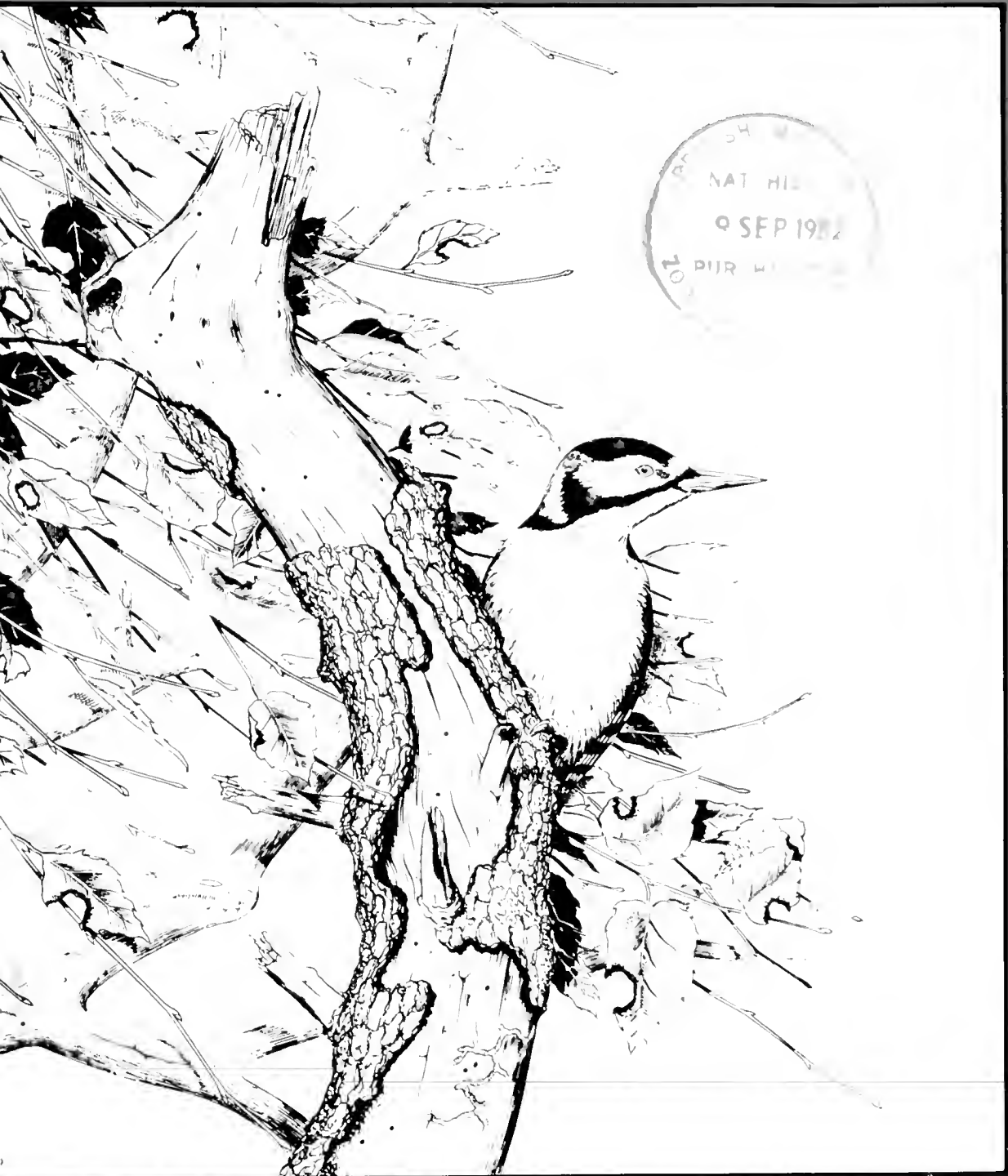
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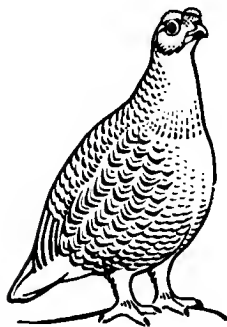
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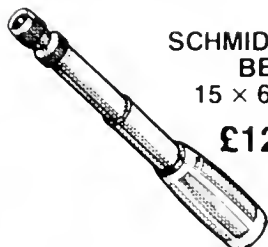
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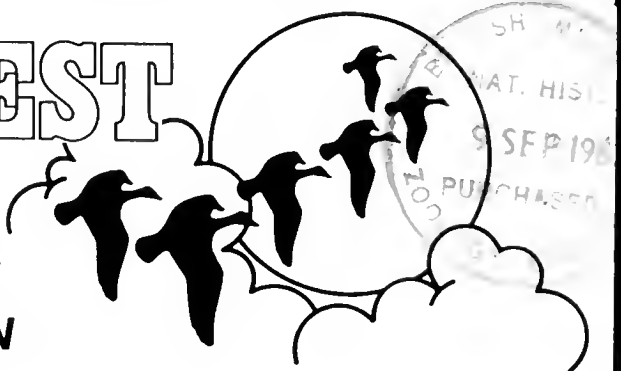
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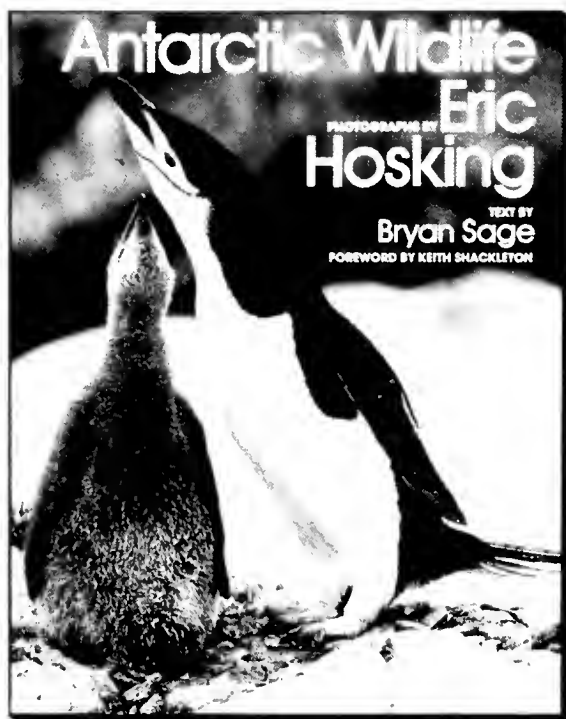
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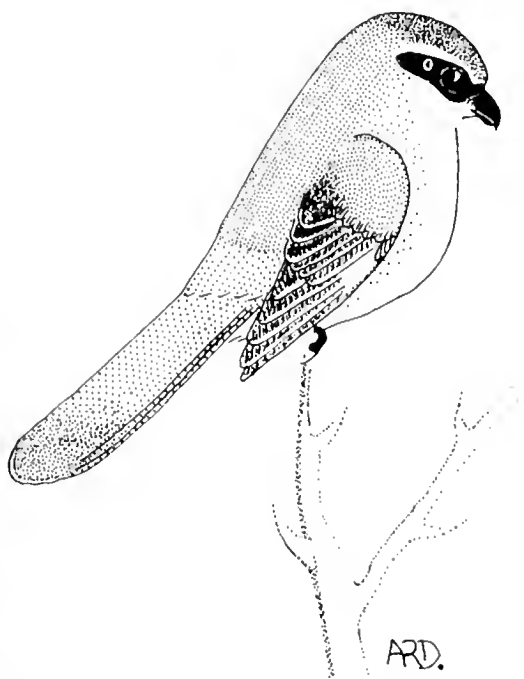
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1982



Field characters of Isabelline and Brown Shrikes

A. R. Dean

The re-establishment of the Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, the Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and the Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* as separate species (Voous 1977 & 1979; BOU Records Committee 1980) has rekindled interest in their field identification. Confusion persists regarding the taxonomy of the group (e.g. Nielsen 1981), but this should not inhibit discussion of plumage distinctions. Although Hollom (1960) and Heinzel *et al.* (1972) noted the salient features of the Isabelline Shrike, descriptions in the popular British literature of both this species and the Brown Shrike remain limited, and in certain respects misleading. In particular, the impression has been given that an obvious white patch at the base of the primaries is an essential field character of all Isabelline Shrikes, yet Ali & Ripley (1972) and Dementiev & Gladkov (1968) indicated that this is a consistent feature only of adult males of the races *phoenicuroides* and *speculigerus*, and is effectively absent in many females and immatures. Conversely, adult male Red-backed Shrikes may in exceptional circumstances reveal a trace of white at the base of the primaries (see *Brit. Birds* 42: plates 8b & 9a). Equally, a decidedly rufous tail is displayed by a proportion of female and immature Red-backed Shrikes, and this feature is not in itself diagnostic of the Isabelline Shrike.



150. First-winter Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Cornwall, October 1965 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)

The Brown Shrike has not yet been recorded in Britain (nor indeed the western Palearctic), but could conceivably occur in the future. Occurrences of the Isabelline Shrike are apparently increasing. The following notes have therefore been prepared as a digest of opinion (both published and private, and controlled by an examination of skins) of the distinctive characters of the species, the emphasis being on features distinguishing the Isabelline Shrike from immature and female Red-backed Shrikes. As birds apparently intermediate in appearance have been recorded (see Dementiev & Gladkov 1968), the distinctions described are tentative rather than definitive, and are intended primarily as a basis for discussion and amplification. Further comment on the appearance and variability of the Brown Shrike in particular is needed. Full details of the geographical distribution of the species and races may be found in Vaurie (1959), while a brief summary was provided by Voous (1979).

General considerations

Unlike the Isabelline Shrike, the Red-backed Shrike displays considerable sexual dimorphism. The adult male Red-backed is distinctive and poses no identification problem, but male and female Isabelline Shrikes are superficially similar at all ages, and show considerable resemblance to female and immature Red-backed Shrikes. Male Red-backed attain adult plumage in their first summer. Younger males, and the majority of females throughout their first year, recall adult females, but exhibit dark crescents on the upperparts as well as the underparts. Juvenile Isabelline Shrikes exhibit more-or-less-prominent barring, but, after the partial moult into

first-winter plumage, the mantle, back and scapulars (hereafter referred to jointly as the 'mantle') become largely or entirely plain, and resemble those of the adult. The juvenile wing and tail feathers are retained, however, and in a significant percentage of birds of this age the supposedly distinctive white primary patch of the Isabelline Shrike is in fact lacking, at least throughout the first winter. Thus, juvenile Red-backed and Isabelline Shrikes may resemble each other to a considerable degree, but in first-winter plumage the unbarred mantle of the Isabelline Shrike is in itself a strongly specific character. Ageing can thus provide a useful clue in the identification process, particularly as young Isabelline Shrikes are unlikely to move far from their natal area before attaining first-winter plumage. Apart from other features, immatures of both species can be confidently distinguished from adults by the presence of a blackish subterminal bar behind the pale tip of each greater covert, tertial and tail feather. Observation of these features does, of course, require careful examination at close range. Owing to inconsistencies in the moult cycle of these species, feather wear appears to be a less reliable guide.

Specific characters of Isabelline and Red-backed Shrikes

Despite considerable racial and individual variation, Isabelline Shrikes do exhibit consistent specific characters. Most importantly, the tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump are all strikingly rufous and, in post-juvenile plumages, contrast obviously with a plain grey-brown to sandy mantle. Adult males display a white or creamy patch of varying obviousness at the base of the primaries and a black or blackish-brown mask or eye-patch on the ear-coverts, often substantially the darkest plumage mark. On females and immatures, the wing-patch is frequently subdued or absent, and the eye-patch less prominent, but the contrastingly rufous rump and tail remain evident. The base of the bill is conspicuously pale and tinged flesh-pink on all immatures, but variably so on adults, particularly of the race *isabellinus*. Immatures and females display a diffuse malar stripe and a certain amount of crescentic marking on the underparts, but, on birds of most races, this is vestigial in first-winter and subsequent plumages, and in the field appears confined to the sides of the breast and flanks. The resulting appearance is of very delicate scaling rather than coarse undulant bars and chevrons. In conjunction with mantle colour, this results in characteristically plain and pallid body plumage. Extreme examples of the race *phoenicuroides*, however, may approach less well-marked Red-backed Shrikes in the tone of the mantle (particularly Red-backed of the rather greyish race *kobylini* of Crimea and the Caucasus) and the prominence of underpart barring, and such individuals require particular care.

Red-backed Shrikes with rufous tails

Female and immature Red-backed Shrikes can exhibit distinctly rufous tails, but, on typical birds, the tail is darker and browner and the mantle and coverts more rufescent than on the Isabelline Shrike (thus lacking marked contrast in the coloration of tail and body), while the rump of adult females is lightly barred and visibly tinged with grey. According to Mack-

worth-Praed & Grant (1973), the undertail of Isabelline is noticeably rufous, whereas that of Red-backed is greyish. Whether this distinction remains valid for those Red-backed with a typically rufous uppertail remains to be conclusively demonstrated. Immatures are much more coarsely barred above and below, while on most adult females the flanks at least display blacker and more prominent crescents than even atypically well-marked *phoenicuroides*. Occasional immatures have both tail and rump decidedly rufous and, since young *phoenicuroides* may retain noticeably barred juvenile body feathers until early September, differences at this age may be slight. A red-tailed shrike which shows obvious mantle barring, body plumage which is not pallid, and no white primary patch *may* still be an Isabelline Shrike, but must be examined especially critically: the possibility of misidentification of birds in this type of plumage is very high. It should always be borne in mind that Isabelline Shrikes are unlikely to reach Britain in pristine juvenile plumage.

At close range, narrow but well-defined white or palest buff fringes and tip to the tail can be discerned on female and immature Red-backed Shrikes when the tail is unworn and fully spread. Isabelline Shrikes exhibit a whitish tip to the tail, but the fringes, if present at all, are gingery or pale rufous-buff and do not form discrete margins. On both immature and female Red-backed Shrikes, the base of the bill is usually less contrastingly pale, being typically yellowish- to greyish-horn and lacking the distinct pink component often displayed by the Isabelline Shrike. Although not forming a field-character, it is worth noting here that the wing of the Red-backed Shrike is emarginated only on primaries 3 and 4 (numbered ascendantly), whereas Isabelline (and Brown) Shrikes are emarginated on primaries 3 to 5 (although emargination on 5th can be overlooked on some individuals and should be checked carefully). In general, the 2nd primary is longer than the 5th in the Red-backed, while the opposite is the case in the Isabelline Shrike. A long and narrow-tailed appearance is sometimes attributed to the Isabelline Shrike: measurements suggest that the Isabelline does average longer, but there is a large degree of overlap in tail length (table 1).

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*

Mainly after Dementiev & Gladkov 1968, and Ali & Ripley 1972; Red-backed length of wing-point based on 11 skins at Birmingham Museum

Features	Isabelline <i>phoenicuroides</i>		<i>isabellinus</i>		Brown <i>cristatus</i>		Red-backed <i>collurio</i>	
Approximate total length	180		180		190		180	
Wing length (range)	81-97		83-103		80-92		83-99	
Wing length (average)								
♂	90.8		90.4		86.5		92.2	
♀	90.4		88.1		84.1		91.6	
Length of wing-point	25-31		22-27		22-27		23-31	
Tail length	74-90		76-94		75-90		70-82	
Difference between length of outermost and longest tail feathers	8-15		8-15		20-25		8-15	
Bill length from feathers	11-14		12-14		14-15		11-14	



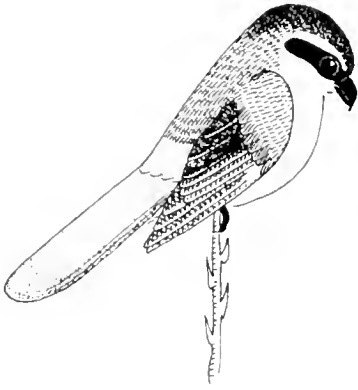
151. Adult (left) and immature Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides*, Afghanistan, August 1970 (S. L. Pimm). Adult has rufous tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump contrasting with grey-brown mantle; rather white underparts; bold head-pattern; and prominent white primary patch. Also, 3rd primary longest, 5th primary longer than 2nd, and 3rd to 5th primaries emarginated. Immature has dark contour lines to greater coverts and tertials, but unmarked mantle; relatively subdued head-pattern; lack of white primary patch; rufous tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump contrasting with rather pale grey-brown mantle

Subspecific characters of Isabelline Shrikes

Voous (1979) recognised four races of the Isabelline Shrike: *isabellinus*, *phoenicuroides*, *speculigerus* and *tsaidamensis*. To date, British records of birds subspecifically identified have involved *phoenicuroides*, but there are a number of indeterminate records of which one at least may have been *isabellinus*. The race *phoenicuroides* is rather variable, some birds being almost as pale as *isabellinus*, but the majority considerably darker. It is these darker birds which are liable to confusion, with both Red-backed and Brown Shrikes. The race *speculigerus* resembles the paler type *phoenicuroides*, but is more creamy, less white below, and has a less well-defined supercilium and a paler tail, though in males the white primary patch is equally prominent; the race *tsaidamensis* resembles *isabellinus*, but is larger and paler. As there is considerable intergrading between populations, subspecific identification may not always be possible, but an examination of typical *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus* characters illustrates the range of variation visible in the field and helps to define the appearance of the species as a whole.

Head-pattern

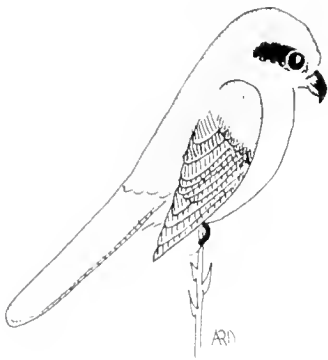
Adults of the race *phoenicuroides* usually have a rather rufous crown contrasting with a greyer nape and mantle, the prominence of this feature being greatest on those of the darker variety and less marked or absent on paler individuals. A reasonably conspicuous and relatively white supercilium extends from the forehead over the eye. On subspecifically well-defined males, black lores, ear-coverts and narrow forehead line combine to produce a continuous black mask from the base of the bill through the eye; on females, the mask is often rather browner and less extensive. These features produce, on better marked individuals, a bold and conspicuously zoned



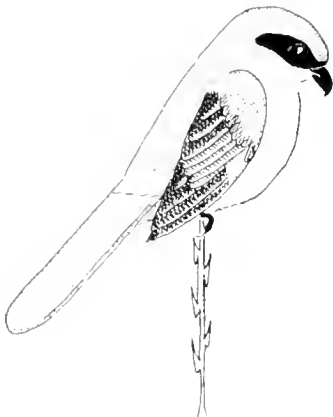
Adult male *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides* of definitive form. Note rufous crown, tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump contrasting with grey-brown mantle; well-defined black mask; white supercilium; and obvious white primary patch



First-winter *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides*. Note dark sub-terminal contour lines to tertials, greater coverts and tail indicating immature; rather pallid appearance; subdued dark barring on crown and rump, but effectively plain mantle; delicate scaling on underparts; poorly defined head-pattern; and pale greyish-pink base to bill. May or may not show white primary patch



Adult male *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*. Note generally pallid appearance with poorly defined face-pattern; uniformly rufous tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump; creamy-white underparts; and barely visible creamy primary patch



Adult male *Lanius isabellinus speculigerus*. Intermediate between *L. i. phoenicuroides* of definitive form and *L. i. isabellinus*. Pale yellowish-grey upperparts, creamy underparts and relatively subdued supercilium recall *isabellinus*, but contrastingly darker wings, extensive black mask, black bill and prominent white primary patch resemble *phoenicuroides*

head-pattern. By comparison, the pale sandy or yellowish-grey crown of *isabellinus* shows little contrast with the mantle, while the supercilium is more creamy and relatively poorly defined. A blackish or dark brown patch extends from in front of the eye to the ear-coverts, but the front of the lores and the forehead are unmarked. In consequence, adult *isabellinus* has a comparatively weaker and more diffuse head-pattern than well differentiated adult *phoenicuroides*. On immatures of both races, the supercilium and eye-patch are less prominent, and both may exhibit pale lores. Some immature male *phoenicuroides* suggest the adult head-pattern, but, in general, differences between the races at this age are slight. Juveniles exhibit fairly obvious crown barring, and this may remain weakly indicated in first-winter plumage.

Mantle

The mantle colour of *phoenicuroides* is typically pale to medium grey-brown, and thus rather darker and denser than the sandy or yellowish-grey of *isabellinus*. Juvenile *phoenicuroides* display fairly obvious undulant barring, but, judging from skins, the mantle of *isabellinus* is largely unmarked even at this age.

Wings

The primaries of adult and some immature male *phoenicuroides* exhibit white bases which combine to form a prominent white rectangle on the folded wing and a white bar on the outer wing in flight. On adult females, the patch may be rather less extensive, but usually remains evident. Adult male *isabellinus* may show a small creamy or pale buff primary patch, but on female *isabellinus* and a majority of immatures of both races the wing-patch is very subdued or absent. In general, the flight feathers of *phoenicuroides* are darker and show more contrast with the secondary and tertial fringes and with the mantle than is the case with *isabellinus*, on which the entire upper surface tends to be rather uniform.

Rump and tail

Both races have distinctly rufous tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump, but on *phoenicuroides* the basic colour is rather richer and more rusty, while the central tail feathers and the distal third of the tail often display noticeable darker sully. On *isabellinus*, the tail is paler rufous (even sandy-rufous) and is comparatively uniform. On immatures of both races, the rump and uppertail-coverts display varyingly well-marked pale tips and subterminal darker bars. A few individuals of all ages show obsolete barring on the tail.

Underparts

Adult *phoenicuroides* tend to be rather whiter, less creamy below than *isabellinus*. Darker female and immature *phoenicuroides* may show moderately distinct crescentic barring on the breast and flanks, but on *isabellinus* barring is vestigial or absent in all post-juvenile plumages. All races may have a variably intense fulvous flush on the sides of the breast and flanks.

Bill colour

The bill colour of most adult male *phoenicuroides* is largely black; some males and most females show a certain amount of horn-pink at the base of the bill. Immatures of both races display a conspicuously pale greyish-pink base to the bill, and on *isabellinus* this feature is frequently pronounced in adults.

Structure

Structurally, *isabellinus* has a shorter and blunter wing and a longer tail on average than *phoenicuroides*, but there is overlap and it is doubtful whether any difference could be detected in the field. Normally, the 3rd primary is the longest in *phoenicuroides* and the 4th in *isabellinus*, but again there are apparently exceptions.

Table 2. Plumage and bill characters of selected races of Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and female and immature Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*

Features	Isabelline <i>phoenicuroides</i>	<i>isabellinus</i>	Brown <i>cristatus</i>	Red-backed <i>collurio</i>
Crown	Contrastingly more rufous than mantle on adults of definitive form; variably so on immatures. Grey-brown, basically matching mantle in paler less well-differentiated types	Basically uniform with mantle	Similar to or rather more rufous than mantle	On female, usually rather greyer than mantle. Less contrast on immatures
Eye-patch	Jet black from base of bill across ear-coverts on adult male of definitive form. Browner and less extensive on female, males of less differentiated type, and immatures	Extends from just in front of eye to ear-coverts with lores unmarked. Blackish-brown on adult male, browner on female, ill-defined on immatures	Extends from base of bill across ear-coverts. Black on adults, browner (but still very dark behind eye and sharply defined) on immatures	Varies in extent and definition on females: usually brownish and poorly differentiated from crown at rear, but some blacker and more precise approaching adult male. Ill-defined on immatures
Supercilium	White or whitish on adults, but indistinct on immatures	Creamy or buffish on adults. Indistinct on immatures	Broad and white on adults, but less pronounced on immatures; most obvious immediately above eye	Buffish-white with darker speckling on adult female; poorly defined on immatures

Features	<i>phoenicuroides</i>	<i>isabellinus</i>	<i>Brown cristatus</i>	Red-backed <i>collurio</i>
Mantle	Pale to medium grey-brown. Juvenile with relatively obvious subterminal dark barring, first-winter with vestigial or no barring	Pale sandy to yellowish-grey. Immature with effectively no barring	Relatively dense russet-brown. Juvenile with obvious, immature with subdued barring	Brown to rufous-brown. Juvenile with prominent, blackish, subterminal bars and subsidiary rufous bars. On first-winter, dark barring remains visible but subdued
Rump	Rufous, matching tail and contrasting with mantle. Juvenile with subterminal barring, sometimes remaining visible into first-winter plumage	Rufous, matching tail and contrasting with mantle. Juvenile with weakly indicated subterminal barring	Russet-brown, similar to or only slightly brighter than mantle and contrasting with tail. Juvenile with subterminal barring remaining weakly indicated in first-winter plumage	On adult female, lightly barred and tinged grey, contrasting with both mantle and tail. Immature frequently much more rufous and obviously barred and may contrast with mantle or tail or both
Tail	Rusty-rufous, with gingery margins, whitish tip, and distal darkening	Pale rufous, with gingery margins and whitish tip, but no distal darkening	More ochraceous or russet, less basically rufous than Isabelline. Fringes usually described as whitish, but difficult to see on skins	Dark brown to rufous-brown, with white fringes and tip
Primary patch	Well-defined, white in adults, especially on males. Frequently but by no means invariably absent on immatures	Inconspicuous, creamy-buff on adult males. Usually absent on females and immatures	White bases to outer primaries normally covered by coverts, but a few individuals may show trace of white	Not visible, white bases to outer primaries concealed by overlapping coverts
Underparts	Whitish, tinged pinkish-buff on breast and flanks. Females and immatures with scaling, but usually indistinct	Creamy with pinkish tinge to breast and flanks. Females with very distinct scaling	Whitish, with variably intense russet flush to breast and belly. Immatures and some females with blackish scaling	White to buffish, with more-or-less-blackish scaling, particularly along flanks
Bill	Largely black on adult male of definitive form. Female and immature with pale pink-tinged base	Adults and immatures with extensive and very pale pink-tinged base	Blackish at tip, but at least a proportion with extensively pink-tinged base	Greyish-horn to blackish-brown on adult female. Immature with paler but usually yellowish or pale horn base



152. Adult Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus speculigerus*, Mongolia, June 1980 (R. H. Dennis). Paler and more uniform above than typical *L. i. phoenicuroides*, with a brighter rufous tail and creamier underparts; supercilium relatively subdued, but black mask well-defined. Bold mask extending to base of bill suggests adult male; although not apparent in plate, white primary patch visible in field

Brown Shrike

The Brown Shrike is unlikely to be confused with the pallid, more classical forms of Isabelline Shrike, but shows considerable similarity to the darker *phoenicuroides* type. On adults of the race *cristatus*, the subspecies most likely to reach Britain, the darker, more richly coloured upperparts are rather uniform, with the mantle and rump basically concolorous. The tail may be somewhat rufescent, but is typically browner or more ochraceous, less basically rufous, than on the Isabelline Shrike. Adults display a bold, black ear-covert patch and a broad white supercilium extending to the forehead, which produce a head-pattern as strong as or even stronger than that of the best-marked *phoenicuroides*, and correspondingly much bolder than on female Red-backed Shrike. A russet flush on the underparts is frequently prominent, but in winter the underparts are whiter. A proportion of adults (principally females) have black crescentic barring on the breast and flanks, but most are unmarked. Bill colour of adults is generally black, but that of immatures may be horn-brown with a flesh base, and thus overlap with Isabelline Shrike. Normally, there is no visible white primary patch, but a very few individuals exhibit a trace of white beyond the tips of the primary coverts (M. Beaman and P. Jepson *in litt.*).

According to Robinson (1927), juveniles have poorly defined head markings and are strongly barred blackish above and below, while first-year birds show indications of subterminal dark cross-bars on the upper surface, most marked on the rump, and narrow black edges to the feathers of the breast and flanks (thus approaching immature Red-backed).

Structurally, the Brown Shrike is more robustly built than the other two species, with greater body bulk, a heavier head and a larger and more prominently hooked bill: it looks big-headed and slim-tailed. The tail feathers are relatively narrow and the outermost feathers are 20-25 mm shorter than the tip (compared with 8-15 mm in the Isabelline and Red-backed Shrikes): a correspondingly more graduated shape results, perhaps best appreciated in flight. Due allowance for moult and wear must, however, be made in estimating tail shape, as skins and photographs suggest that Isabelline Shrikes with part-grown and correspondingly short outermost tail feathers may be encountered at almost any season (see, for

example, *British Birds* 69: plate 35). Like Isabelline, but unlike Red-backed, Brown has the 5th primary emarginated.

The three more easterly races of the Brown Shrike are unlikely to reach Britain. In certain plumage characters, however, the races *lucionensis* and *confusus* tend to converge with the Isabelline Shrike, and a brief examination of the salient features of the eastern races is therefore warranted. Judging from skins, the race *superciliosus* exhibits distinctly ruddy underparts in all plumages, while adults have an extensively white forehead and supercilium. Adults of the race *lucionensis* have a lavender-grey crown, contrasting with a rather browner mantle; individuals of all ages have visibly rufous-tinged rump and uppertail-coverts, though these contrast with both mantle and tail. The race *confusus* is paler and greyer than the nominate form, and on immatures the upperpart barring is relatively inconspicuous; the rump of this race is again obviously rufous, but the tail is more russet and, thus, significantly browner.

Very careful attention to structure; mantle, rump and tail colour (especially strength of brown component in tail); and relative contrasts between these areas, is clearly crucial to the successful identification of a suspected Brown Shrike. The principal differences between the three species are summarised in table 2.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due to Paul Jepson of Manchester University who is undertaking a computer-based evaluation of shrike characteristics: his comments helped to clarify several points. The members of the Rarities Committee, especially P. J. Grant and S. C. Madge, provided valuable criticism of a draft of the text. I should like to thank M. J. Rogers for providing data from the files of the Rarities Committee, and I. C. J. Galbraith and P. Hamer for arranging access to skins at, respectively, the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. R. H. Dennis and Dr S. Pinum kindly provided photographs.

Summary

Although the Isabelline *Lanius isabellinus* and Red-backed Shrikes *L. collurio* are very closely related, and intergrading and hybridisation have been reported, typical individuals of each species can nevertheless be identified in the field. A white primary patch is a consistent feature only on adult male Isabelline Shrikes of certain races, but there are other specific characters. Ageing is an important preliminary to identification, since in first-winter plumage the effectively unbarred mantle of the Isabelline Shrike is in itself a useful feature. On adults and first-winter birds, distinctly rufous tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump contrasting with a pallid grey-brown to sandy mantle, and virtually unmarked body plumage, are good indicators of Isabelline Shrike, though some darker females of the race *phoenicuroides* have less distinct body plumage. Such birds require care, as a small percentage of female Red-backed Shrikes have atypically rufous tails. Immature Red-backed Shrikes not infrequently display a significant rufous component to both tail and lower rump; since juvenile Isabellines may have visibly barred mantles, the overlap of characters between July and early September may be considerable. Subsidiary characters of the Isabelline Shrike include the lack of discrete white margins to the tail and, especially in immatures and *isabellinus*, a pellucid pink-tinged base to the bill. The Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* is more problematical. Compared with the Isabelline Shrike, birds of the nominate form display rather russet upperparts and basically concolorous mantle and rump, while the tail is russet-brown or ochraceous rather than rufous. The underparts frequently display an extensive russet flush. Certain eastern races, however, are rather greyer above and have a visibly rufous-tinged rump. There is normally no visible white primary patch, though on a few individuals a trace of white remains unconcealed by the coverts. Immatures are visibly barred, though generally less extensively than the Red-backed

Shrike. This species is more powerfully built than either the Red-backed or the Isabelline Shrike and has a larger bill and a more graduated tail. Careful appraisal of structure; of mantle, rump and tail colour; of the contrasts between these areas; of the presence of white in the wing; and of the prominence and distribution of any barring, is crucial to the successful identification of red-tailed shrikes.

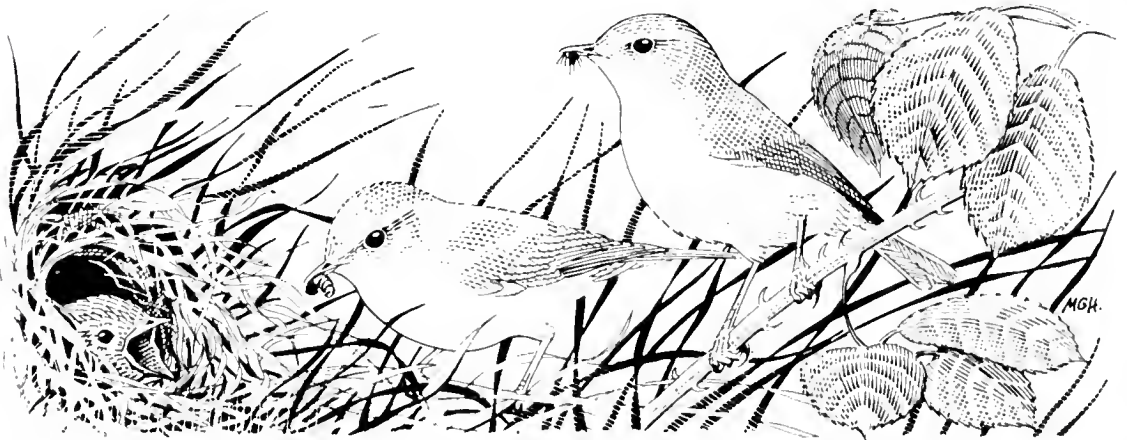
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Polygamy by Willow Warblers

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The Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* is generally considered to be single brooded, though a small proportion of pairs may raise a second brood (Campbell & Ferguson-Lees 1972; Witherby *et al.* 1938-41). Few if any of these records of 'second broods' being raised by 'pairs' of Willow

Warblers were, however, substantiated by colour ringing, observers generally being content to assume that a second, later nest close to the first was the work of the original male and female. Although bigamy is not uncommon in some passerines, it was apparently not recorded in the case of the Willow Warbler until Lawn (1978) observed behaviour by a colour-ringed male in a Surrey birchwood which strongly suggested that he had fathered two broods by different females.

This short paper documents, in rather more detail, a similar occurrence in southeast Scotland. Although only one male was involved, he mated with five different females in two consecutive breeding seasons. All the birds involved were uniquely colour ringed, all their nests were found and, since the site was visited every day during the warbler season, fairly precise estimates of arrival and departure dates can be given.

The study area is a scrub-filled valley of 10.4 ha which provides about 40 territories for up to seven species of warbler. Although warblers have been ringed and censused there since 1973, the more intensive work which led to these observations took place over the three seasons 1979-81.

Observations

The male involved (referred to here as 'A') was first handled as a juvenile in summer 1978. On 4th May 1979, he reappeared in the valley and began to defend a territory. On 10th May, however, another male (B, age unknown) appeared, and by 15th May had succeeded in driving A from both his territory and the valley. A was later found holding a territory in a small shelterbelt some 500m from his first choice. His breeding success there is not known. On 30th June, he reappeared in the valley, where he stayed to moult.

In 1980, A arrived in the valley on 16th April and took up a new territory adjacent to the one he had held briefly in 1979. Male B did not return in 1980. On 5th May, a female (C) arrived and paired with A. They nested a little earlier than the other 13 pairs of Willow Warblers in the valley and their six young fledged on 8th June. As often happens with warblers, the female took the young off outwith the valley around 18th June. A second female (D) had arrived on 19th May, and A paired with her while his first mate was incubating. D built a nest 38m from C's nest. Her clutch of five eggs was smaller than C's seven, and only three chicks hatched. All three fledged on 29th June. D had also been present in 1979, when she had mated with male B (A's aggressor in 1979) again laying five eggs, but fledging five young. A fed his first brood in the nest and after fledging, until the second brood hatched on 15th June. He then fed the later brood until they too were taken out of the study area by female D a few days after fledging.

These events are shown in fig. 1, which also shows weight data. The reduction in A's weight while feeding young is typical of male Willow Warblers, but occurred over a longer-than-normal period, owing to the two broods. Neither female was caught frequently enough to show the full build-up to egg-laying weight properly. Female weights declined during incubation, and when the chicks were being fed. The first female (C) weighed less than the second (D) at comparable stages of the breeding

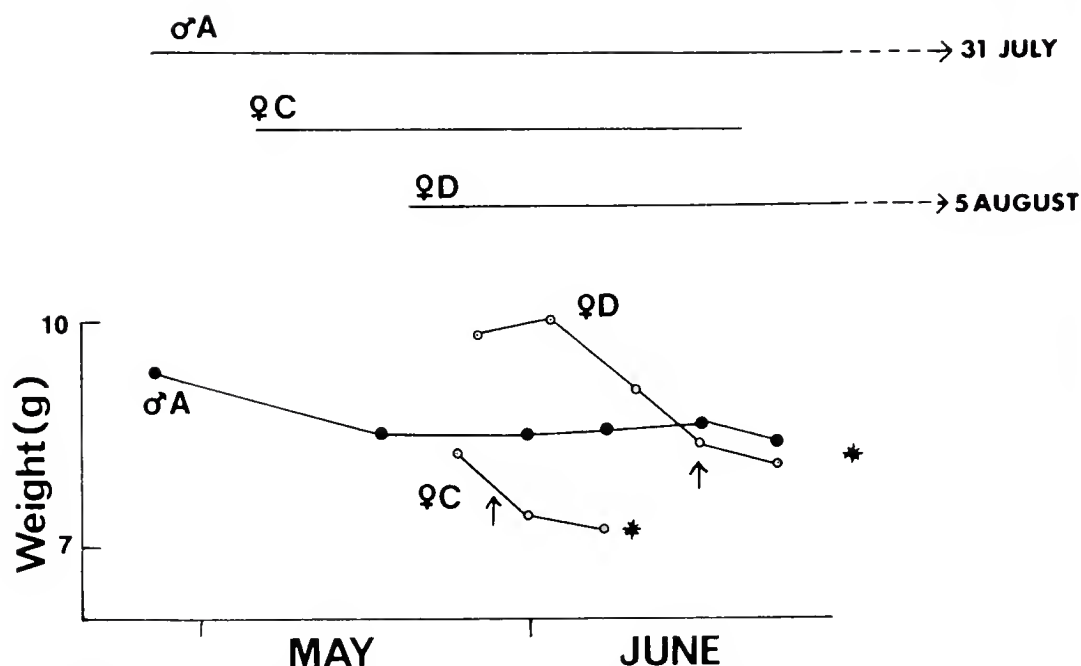


Fig. 1. Weight changes of bigamous male Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (A) and his two mates (C & D) in 1980. Hatching dates (arrows) and fledging dates (*) of the two broods are also shown. Horizontal lines show period each bird present in study area

cycle, despite being larger (wing 65mm as opposed to 62mm), suggesting that she experienced greater stress. This may reflect the fact that D was an experienced adult whereas C was probably breeding for the first time.

Nestling weights (fig. 2) follow a typical pattern of rapid early increase followed, towards fledging, by a levelling off at weights of around 10.0g. Neither brood showed any signs of food shortage. The greater variation in the weights of the early brood is typical of larger broods even when both parents give their undivided attention to the chicks. The fact that the later brood was smaller is again typical both of warblers and of other small insectivorous passerines (e.g. tits *Parus*: Perrins 1979); it is not a function of the bigamous relationship.

The second female (D) returned to the valley around 20th July to complete her moult. Male A stayed throughout the moult period. In 1980, A's timing of moult was very similar to that of D, his second mate, which is unusual, since males normally start and finish moult about one week ahead of females.

It is difficult to keep track of young warblers once they leave the natal area. At least one of the second brood was seen alive and independent in another area of scrub in mid July. None of the chicks returned to the study area in the following year, but this also applies to most chicks from more normal nests.

In 1981, A arrived back on 18th April. His previous territory was already occupied by a first-year male which had been ringed in a nest about 90m away in 1980. Although arriving early on the breeding grounds may help a young male against other first-year birds, older males seem to have no trouble in displacing youngsters. A swiftly reoccupied his old territory, although the young male did manage to hold another, adjoining territory.

Neither of A's 1980 mates reappeared, and his first 1981 pairing was with

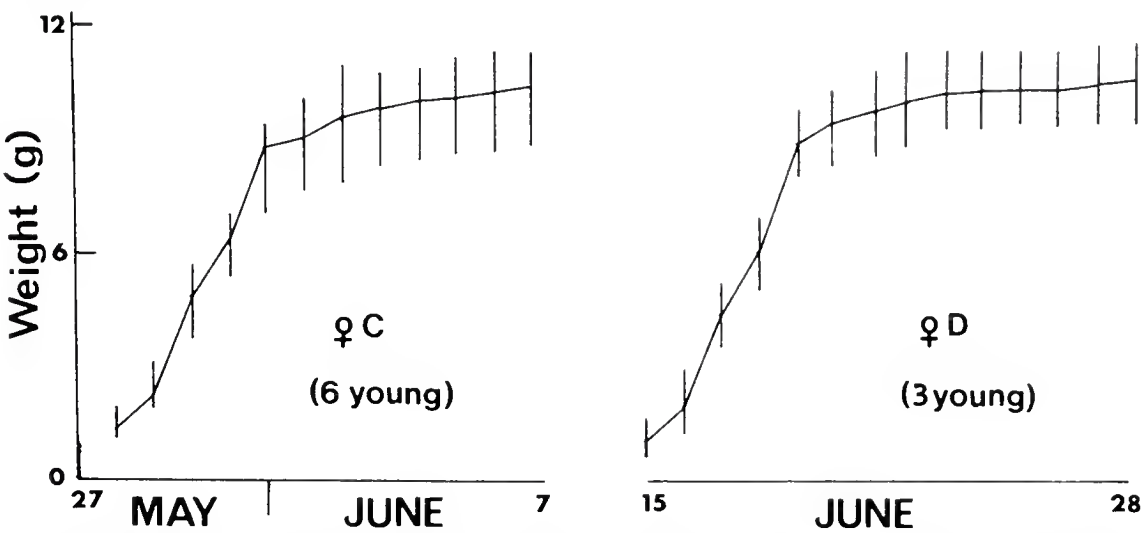


Fig. 2. Weights of two broods of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* fathered by bigamous male A in 1980. Curves show changes in mean weights of each brood; vertical lines show ranges within brood

a new female (E), who arrived on 8th May. Her clutch of six eggs hatched on 6th June, but on 11th June the young were taken by a predator, probably a weasel *Mustela nivalis*. E left the valley, which seems to be typical of female warblers which have suffered predation but survived themselves. A took food to the young, although, by this time, he had mated with another female (F), who had arrived on 9th May. Her clutch was started only three days after E's, which is important, since it could not have been a response to the disappearance of A's first mate (E) and her brood. The six eggs all hatched, but one chick was found dead and bloody on 15th June, and the rest were all taken by a predator two days later. Several warblers' nests suffered predation in 1981, probably due to high weasel numbers.

Neither E nor F had been seen in the study area before 1981: both females may have been one-year-olds. A's third mate in 1981, however, was definitely older. This female (G) was first ringed as an adult in May 1978, making her at least four years old by 1981. She had reared a brood in the valley in both 1979 and 1980, though with a different male each year, despite her 1979 mate returning to breed in the valley in both 1980 and 1981. Her mate from 1980 did not return in 1981. She was present in the valley between 9th and 11th May, but then disappeared until 11th June, when she was seen with fledged young; they were almost independent, and must have been reared at a site elsewhere, probably within a few kilometres of the study area. Female G then paired with A, and started laying on 17th June, which is late for a Willow Warbler in southeast Scotland. The nest site was also unusual, being situated within a thick stand of flowering rosebay willowherb *Epilobium angustifolium*, a site more typical of Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. The clutch of five all hatched, and they fledged on 14th July. Note that G's first egg was laid on the day that the second brood was killed; this means that mating must have occurred before nest predation took place. Both adults (A and G) fed the chicks, although, by this time, A was well into moult (on 25th July he was caught with a primary moult score of 35). The female (G) started moulting at about the

time that the chicks hatched. She disappeared from the study area with the young around 19th July, leaving A, who stayed to complete his moult.

Discussion

What significance, if any, do these events have for our understanding of Willow Warbler biology in general? It seems likely that estimates that 5%-20% of Willow Warblers 'double-brood', based on BTO nest record cards (Cramp 1955) or earlier fieldwork in Lothian (Brock 1910) and southeast England (May 1949), include bigamous pairings. (It seems relevant to note that five male and three female Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* breeding in the study area each had two mates in the same season, but that none of the seven species of warblers using the site has so far double-brooded with its original mate.) Most Willow Warblers, however, are neither double-brooded nor polygamous. In three years, 33 males held territory in the study area, ten for two or three seasons. Apart from two males which died, only one failed to secure a mate. There were no genuine double broods, and only male A had more than one female in a season, although female G had two males.

If some warblers can produce more than one brood, why does this happen so rarely in Scotland, and has bigamy any advantage over conventional double-brooding? In Scotland, Willow Warblers are rarely able to fledge young before mid June, which means that genuine double-brooding would be impossible, unless the adults reared the second brood while in moult. Although some adults do start moulting before the young are independent, few are as far advanced as the polygamous male in 1981; presumably, feeding young and moulting impose a considerable strain. The third 1981 pairing (A and G) was probably highly unusual, since both male and female were feeding young in the nest while in moult: it seems to represent opportunism by two experienced birds. Second, overlapping pairings, such as those recorded in 1980 and 1981 (A with D, and A with F) may be more common, since they seem to allow a male to produce more young without seriously upsetting his moult schedule. The costs of such a course may not be too high for an experienced male, since he can have two females by defending only one normal-sized territory, and the females probably bear a disproportionate share of feeding the young. Female costs may be greater: note that neither of the 1980 females (C and D) returned to the valley. Since females do not outnumber males, polygamy is probably limited by the number of females prepared to share a mate. Later in the season, however, this may be the only way that a hen which has failed to breed successfully at a first attempt can produce young.

Only by further sustained observations of individually marked birds—ideally in different parts of the species' range, where the time available for breeding and moulting is different—can these speculations be tested.

Summary

Studies of individually colour-ringed Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* in southeast Scotland in three breeding seasons (1979-81) revealed that one male, which had difficulty holding a territory when one year old, successfully bred with two females when two years old, and mated with three other females when three years old (though two of these three broods were killed by

predators). The polygamous matings occurred before earlier broods either fledged or were killed. None of the chicks showed evidence of food shortage, though the females may have been under more stress than in a normal pairing. It is suggested that some records of double-brooding really refer to polygamy, and that polygamy allows a migrant with a short breeding season to produce more offspring without adversely affecting the timing of moult and migration.

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Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

When this feature commenced in 1960, under the title 'Examples of the best recent work by British bird-photographers', the intention was to place on record in one journal the finest bird-photographs produced, to encourage competition, to give newcomers to bird-photography an opportunity of seeing their work published, and to show photographs which normally fall outside the scope of those in *British Birds*. Other factors being equal, preference was to be given to photographers and species which had not previously been featured (*Brit. Birds* 58: 179).

Over the years, some changes have been forced upon us, though the criteria set out above hold as much now as they did in 1959. The gradual change in emphasis over the years from black-and-white to colour photography has been catered for by the introduction of the 'Bird Photograph of the Year' competition, so in 1978 this original feature was restricted to black-and-white work, and at the same time was opened to foreign bird-photographers, with the proviso that the species concerned should be on the west Palearctic list.

The expense of reproducing colour photographs is such that black-and-white photographs will remain our normal form of reproduction, and we would accordingly urge bird-photographers to do at least some of their work in black-and-white. We on our part shall continue our long-held tradition of supporting and encouraging black-and-white bird-photography, in particular by means of this annual feature.

This year, the twenty-third of this feature, the number of both photographers and photographs from which we have been able to select was somewhat less than in recent years: 141 prints from 23 photographers. The standard, however, remains as high as ever. True to the aims of the competition, we have been able to include work by three newcomers, Ed Mackrill, Richard Mills and David Cottridge, though many readers will be surprised that Richard Mills, winner of the 1980 Bird Photograph of the Year competition, has not been featured previously. And six bird species are included for the first time: Slavonian Grebe, Goldeneye, Lesser Kestrel, Pheasant, Whimbrel and Spotted Flycatcher. In 1970 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 111), we commented on the welcome trend for photographs to be of birds away from the nest. This trend has been maintained, and applies equally to the current selection, with only two of our 14 photographs being the result of 'nest photography' in the strict sense, though others have clearly been taken in the vicinity of the nest.

We do not object to nest photography if the welfare of the birds is given prime consideration; but should like to take this opportunity to remind photographers that species in Schedule I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) must not be disturbed at or near the nest without a permit from the Nature Conservancy Council (19-20 Belgrave Square, London SW1 8PX). Any such photographs which are submitted for possible publication in *British Birds* are accepted on the understanding that such permission was obtained. If the photograph was taken abroad, it will similarly be assumed that the legislation of that country concerning bird-photography was complied with.

Last year, Ernest Janes achieved the unprecedented feat of having four photographs accepted for this feature; this year, he has managed this for the second time, with fine shots of House Martin (plate 153), Spotted Flycatcher (plate 157), Jay (plate 159) and Kingfisher (plate 163). The House Martin shot is a delightful portrait of the species at an extremely attractive nest site under the eaves of a knapped-flint Bedfordshire building. Spotted Flycatchers will occasionally feed on or from the ground, and this interesting aspect of the species' usually more arboreal life style was captured by Ernest Janes in plate 157 from a hide at a drinking pool as the bird was waiting for a passing insect. The photograph of the Jay shows another interesting aspect of behaviour, the bird brooding young to shelter them from the rain, whilst we could not resist the shot of the Kingfisher, with prey, perched on the 'No Fishing' sign!

We much admired Keith Atkins' photograph (plate 154) of Goldeneyes in flight, apparently taken on a dull but calm day, their reflections adding a further dimension to the picture, showing that the birds are, in fact, low over the water. Slavonian Grebes are not often photographed, especially away from the nest, and we were delighted by David Cottridge's portrait of one that had just emerged from a successful dive, the ripples adding much to the charm of the picture (plate 155).

Turtle Doves are not often photographed away from the nest, and it is nice to be able to show J. Russell's photograph of two (plate 156), possibly a pair, feeding together on weed seeds. Plate 161, also by J. Russell, shows a



153. Above, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Bedfordshire, July 1981 (*E. A. Jones*)

154 & 155. Page 411, top, Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*, Lincolnshire, January 1982 (*Keith Atkin*);
bottom, Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Greater London, September 1981 (*David M. Cottridge*)

156 & 157. Page 415, top, Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, Derbyshire, June/July 1980 (*J. Russell*);
bottom, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Hertfordshire, July 1975 (*E. A. Jones*)

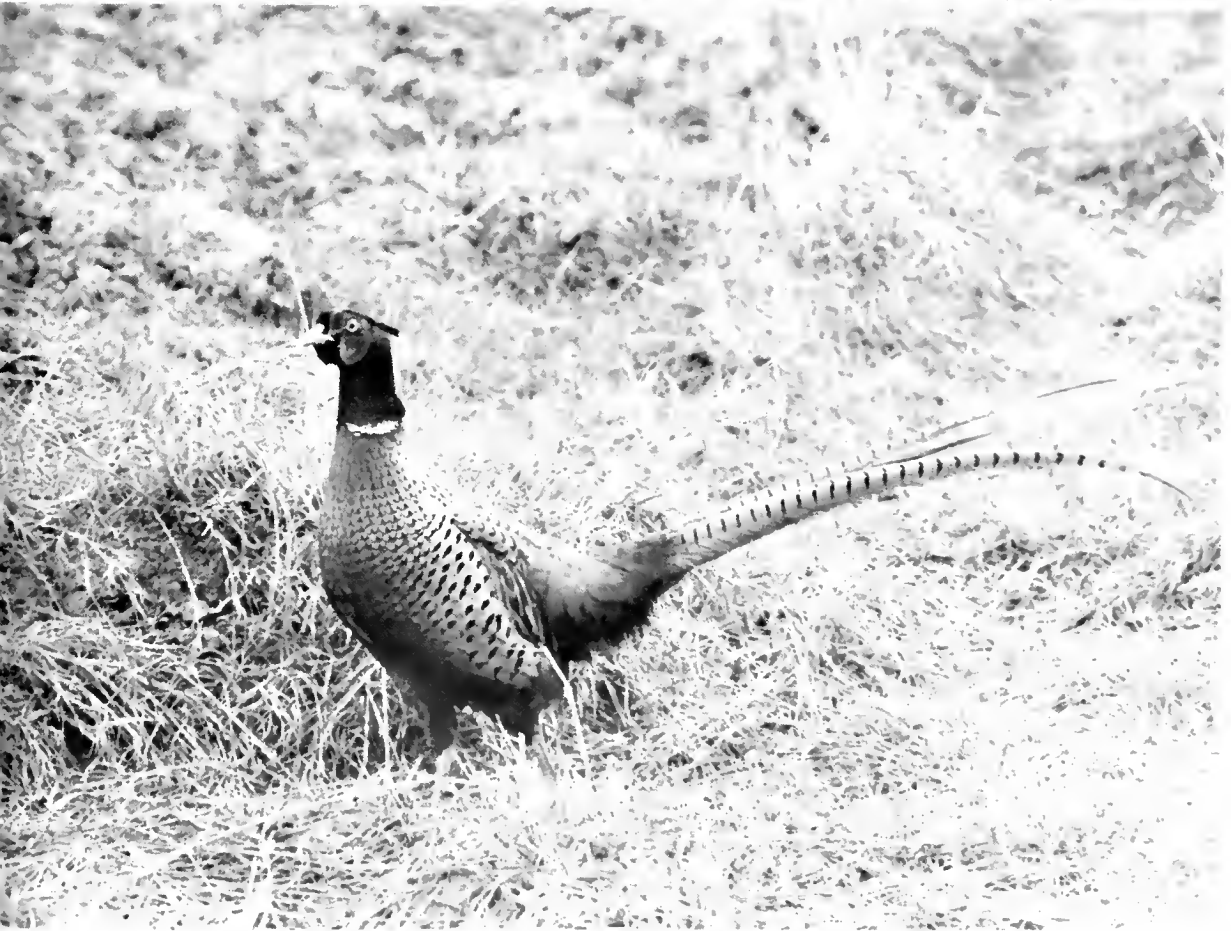
158 & 159. Page 416, top, Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, West Glamorgan, March 1981 (*Harold E. Grenfell*);
bottom, Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Powys, June 1981 (*E. A. Jones*)

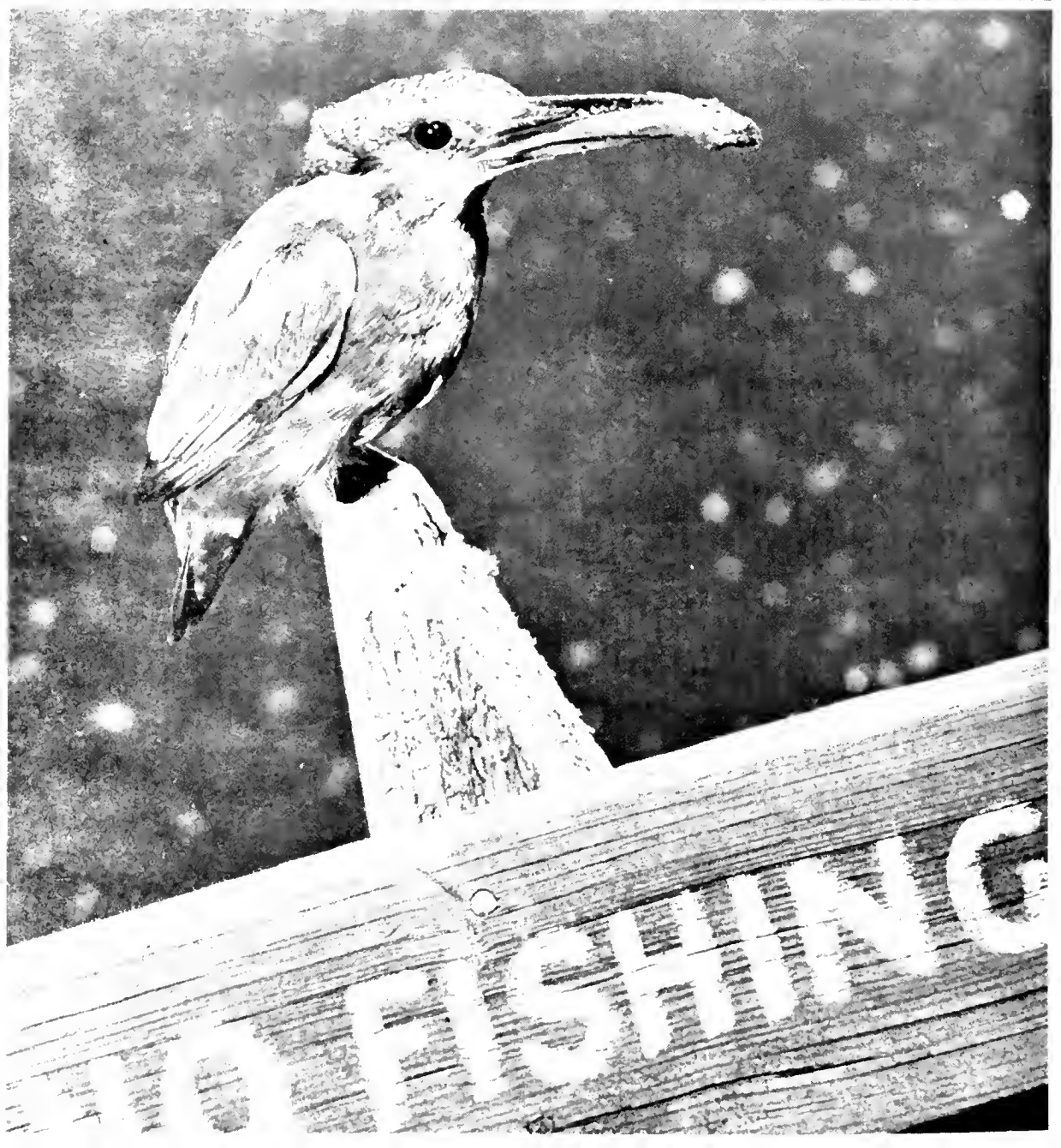
160 & 161. Page 417, top, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Iceland, June 1981 (*P. Beasley*); bottom,
Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Derbyshire, April 1980 (*J. Russell*)















- 162 & 163.** Page 418, top, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Peru, January 1982 (Ed Mackrill); bottom, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Worcestershire, August 1981 (E. A. Janes)
- 164 & 165.** Page 419, top, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Portugal, May 1981 (K. J. Carlson); bottom, Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*, Merseyside, November 1981 (Anthony J. Bond)
- 166.** Page 420, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Co. Wexford, Ireland, June 1977 (Richard T. Mills)

fine study of a cock Pheasant: a very photogenic species, though one often neglected by photographers.

It is good to be able to include five shots of flying birds this year; Harold Grenfell's photograph of a Buzzard in flight (plate 158) is neatly put into the context of a March woodland by the leafless tree tops that frame the lower part of the picture and add so much to its charm.

The Whimbrel has, strangely, not featured previously in this competition; we have rarely seen a portrait as handsome as that taken in Iceland by P. Beasley (plate 160), showing superb feather detail and standing out almost three-dimensionally from a well chosen, out-of-focus background. Plumage detail is also shown by another flight shot, a winter-plumaged Turnstone photographed in Peru by Ed Mackrill (plate 162), while Dr Kevin Carlson's fine flight shot of a female Lesser Kestrel (plate 164; his twelfth to be featured in this competition) shows well the elongated central tail feathers that are characteristic of this species.

Great Skuas are not often photographed away from their breeding grounds; Tony Bond's shot of a migrant at Merseyside in November (plate 165) shows well the bulk of this species, though exaggerated somewhat by the slightly oblique angle of the bird to the camera. This is the fourth successive year that Tony Bond has been featured in this series.

The final photograph (plate 166) is by Richard Mills, of a Roseate Tern in flight; this is not an uncommon shot of a tern, but its long tail streamers, translucent wings lacking a dark trailing edge to the primaries, and all-black bill make a fine comparison with the more usual pictures of Common or Arctic Terns (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 73: 180).

As usual, we invite photographers to submit a selection of their black-and-white photographs for next year's feature, the closing date for which will be 31st January 1983 (not the end of March as previously), and ask them to note our general requirements for black-and-white prints (pages 426-428).

R. J. CHANDLER and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Seventy-five years ago...

'DARTFORD WARBLER IN CORNWALL.—Dr. Clark says that it was unrecorded after the hard winter of 1886-7 until May, 1889, when one was seen at Hayle. In April, 1904, a nest was found near Penryn, and in 1905 one at Linkinhorne, and another at St. Buryan.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 126, September 1907)

Mystery photographs

69 With really good views there is no problem in separating Bridled *Sterna anaethetus* and Sooty Terns *S. fuscata*. Only one other species comes into the reckoning: in view of the recent addition of Aleutian Tern *S. aleutica* to the western Palearctic list, consideration must be given to the Spectacled Tern *S. lunata* of the central South Pacific. I have no experience of this species, however, and the literature is not too helpful, so I merely drop its name, to be borne in mind should you be fortunate enough to be confronted by a *Sterna* tern with dark upperparts.



The bird in the photograph is an adult Bridled Tern (photographed by Dr R. J. Raines in Australia in February 1980). On such views, identification is no problem. The obvious black cap, extending just onto the nape, and the narrow white forehead-patch, extending back well beyond the eye as an obvious white supercilium, are distinctive features. The white-collared effect so often referred to in the literature is, however, far from a useful feature, but the contrast between the black cap and the palish grey/brown of much of the upperparts is very strong and obvious. The primaries and secondaries are several shades darker than the upperwing-coverts and mantle. In common with Sooty Tern, this species shows an obvious white leading edge to the inner section of the wing. The tail and upperparts are grey/brown. The white outer tail feathers are rather broader than those of Sooty Tern, so when viewed from above the tail can appear less forked than on the darker species.

The underparts of both Sooty and Bridled are white, with a dark rear edge to the underwing. They are, however, highly reflective and can appear buff, green or blue when flying over sand or water.

The adult Sooty Tern is black above, apart from the white forehead, leading edge of the inner wing, and outer tail feathers. With really good views, this is very obvious and totally distinctive.

The Bridled Tern is noticeably smaller than the Sooty, but assessing size of a lone seabird is generally difficult or impossible. If, however, there are other species nearby for comparison, make use of them. Always ensure, however, that, in the excitement, the common species is correctly identified; this is easy if the rarity lingers, but a 'fly-through' could cause problems. For example, was it compared with a Common *Larus canus* or a Herring Gull *L. argentatus*? Was it flying with a juvenile Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* or a Little Gull *L. minutus*? These could be easy mistakes to make, but would totally throw out one's size assessment.

The possibility of misidentification greatly increases with poor views



167. Mystery photograph 70. Identify the species. Answer next month

(e.g. distant, in poor light, or very brief), or with an immature. The latter is quite another problem, and one that warrants a full discussion, perhaps in a future issue. Does anyone have good photographs of flying adult or immature Sooty Terns, or of immature Bridled Tern? D. J. HOLMAN

Notes

Male Montagu's Harrier with broad white rump-patch

On 19th June 1978, south of the River Guadalquivir near Lebrija, Spain, D. J. Fisher, S. J. M. Gantlett and I saw a male Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* which was typical in every way of an adult male (a rather dark grey individual) except that it showed a broad and prominent white patch on the rump. On 11th June 1981, near Sarinena, northern Spain, D. Thorogood and I saw another adult male with a rather narrow but complete white rump-patch.

R. A. HUME

41 Sandy Road, Potton, Bedfordshire



Richard Porter has commented as follows: 'Male Montagu's Harriers can occasionally show white on the rump (or, to be more accurate, the uppertail-coverts). A measure of its rarity can be gauged from the fact that we made no mention of it in *Flight Identification of European Raptors* (1976, 1978, 1981) until the third edition. Normally, the patch is narrow on those individuals on which it occurs; thus, one with a "broad and prominent white patch on the rump" must be very unusual.' Eds

Coot flying with feet tucked up At about 09.10 GMT on 27th January 1979, a very cold day with standing water frozen and 2 cm of snow on the ground, at Stodmarsh, Kent, P. R. Laslett and I observed several Coots *Fulica atra* flying high into the wind. One appeared different from the others in shape, recalling a Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, but was in fact a Coot with its feet held up, bent forward, and completely hidden by the fluffed-up feathers of the belly. It flew in this way, at a height of about 20 m (high for a

Coot), for 500-600 m, and landed on the open water of the River Stour; its wingbeats were faster than normal for a Coot, more like those of a Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*. In February 1963, also in Kent, I twice saw Coots flying in a similar manner. This mode of flying may help the species following heat loss through the ('oversized') feet after grazing in snow or frost.

J. N. HOLLYER

21 Temple Way, Worth, Deal, Kent CT14 0DA

Turnstones and Purple Sandpipers eating bar of soap Some years ago, at Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, I watched eight Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and three Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* eat a complete bar of 'Lifebuoy' soap, still partially in its wrapper, on the shoreline. Their excitement and eagerness at finding what the dank wrapper contained was as intense as that of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*: the waders fairly pushed and knocked each other over as they absolutely gobbled the soap. When I returned a couple of hours later, there were still two Turnstones at work, perhaps not the same ones; the soap had been consumed entirely, and the waders were eating the only remaining specks of the wrapper, which had a thin veneer of soap adhering to them.

FRANK KING

The Orchards, Blennerville, Tralee, Co. Kerry, Ireland

Pauline Swayne of Lever Brothers Limited, the manufacturers of Lifebuoy, has informed us that the main constituents of this soap are tallow and vegetable oil, with very small quantities of perfume and colouring matter. As Frank King says: 'Now, *that* is what I call Inner Cleanliness!' EDS

Letter

Mortality of Sparrowhawks and Kestrels The findings of Newton *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 195-204) are similar in most respects to ours (Keymer *et al.* 1981). We wish to comment, however, on some important differences, especially regarding organochlorine poisoning.

The authors stated that each bird was 'deep frozen until it could be examined'. Deep-frozen carcasses are unsatisfactory because freezing damages the cellular structure of organs and most parasites. When frozen carcasses are thawed prior to examination, the tissues gradually decompose and blood-tinged fluid slowly diffuses from them. This can give the impression of 'widespread internal bleeding' which these authors attributed to organochlorine poisoning. Very few of our specimens were deep frozen, and we failed to observe any haemorrhage associated with organochlorine poisoning. Indeed, we know of no reports in the literature of organochlorine poisoning being associated with haemorrhage.

The authors also stated that our survey was similar to theirs 'but with the emphasis on disease'. This is not true. Our emphasis was on ascertaining the cause of death. Our examinations were not, however, hindered by freezing, which makes it impossible to interpret microscopical examinations accurately and, with the exception of arthropods such as mites, difficult to identify parasites.

We recommend that all surveys based on carcase examinations should avoid deep-frozen specimens so far as possible, in order to avoid mis-

interpretation of findings. In our experience, even moderate decomposition is preferable to the damage caused by freezing.

I. F. KEYMER, M. R. FLETCHER and P. I. STANLEY
MAFF, Veterinary Investigation Centre, Norwich; and
MAFF, Tolworth Laboratory, Agricultural Science Service, Surrey

Dr I. Newton, A. A. Bell and I. Wyllie have replied as follows: 'We agree that deep-freezing is not ideal for post-mortem work and that instant examination is preferable. In our case, this was not usually practicable, especially as some of the specimens had been frozen before we received them. We are also familiar with the 'blood-tinged fluid', which slowly collects in the body cavity after the thawing of some deep-frozen specimens. This is a watery liquid, usually stained brown, presumably by haemoglobin or some similar pigment.

'What we attributed to haemorrhage was quite distinct. It entailed the bleeding of certain internal organs, particularly the brain, proventriculus, gizzard, or lungs, and appeared as discrete lesions, often affecting the whole tissue. It was different again from the type of bleeding caused by impact, in birds which had died from collisions. If the internal haemorrhages were mere artefacts of freezing, rather than a parasitic effect, we could not account for the facts that: (1) more of the haemorrhaged birds had high levels of HEOD (from aldrin and dieldrin) or DDE (from DDT) than did birds which died from other causes; (2) haemorrhaged birds were most frequent from areas of highest aldrin/dieldrin usage; (3) haemorrhaged birds were most frequent in winter/spring when dressed grain was sown; (4) such haemorrhages were much less frequent in birds which were known to have died from other causes, such as shooting, collisions or starvation (but which still contained organochlorines); (5) haemorrhaged birds became less frequent after 1975, following the known reduction in aldrin/dieldrin use. However our birds died, they were all treated in the same way, including deep-freezing.

'Our critics state that they know of no cases from the literature of organochlorines causing haemorrhages. When we wrote our paper, we knew of none either, but since then we have come across a study done in conjunction with their own department, in which Blackmore (1963) describes "haemorrhages in the lungs" as being characteristic of foxes which have died from organochlorine poisoning. He does not state that his animals were deep-frozen beforehand, and the implication is that they were not. He also quotes work by Carnaghan & Blaxland (1957), who observed haemorrhages in the carcasses of various birds which had died after eating dressed corn. Most surprising, however, was that Dr Keymer himself was acknowledged for conducting some post-mortems on owls, which had died in the London Zoo after eating dieldrin-contaminated mice. Symptoms in some of these birds included "subarachnoid petechial haemorrhages" (Jones *et al.* 1978). Because organochlorines often cause convulsions, they might for this reason be expected to produce internal haemorrhages. Harrison (1963-64) recorded a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* which died in convulsions, and was subsequently found to have a ruptured heart and at least 3.5 ppm of dieldrin in the breast muscle.

'This still leaves the question why Keymer *et al.* (1981) did not notice haemorrhages in their Kestrels. They stated that detailed post-mortems were done only after 1977, and only on 42 birds. They therefore covered a period of much reduced aldrin/dieldrin use (after 1975), and could, on a sample of this size, have missed getting any. Only 9% of the 106 Kestrels which we examined in 1976-79 (after the 1975 ban) showed haemorrhages, far fewer than in previous years. And not all organochlorine victims showed haemorrhages.' Eds

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Thanks

Many people help *BB* in many ways, giving their time, advice or expertise free. We do not take this for granted, but constantly appreciate their assistance. The members of our two notes panels and the Rarities Committee, and authors or compilers of regular features such as 'News and comment' and 'Recent reports' devote many hours each month to *BB*, while photographers and artists supply their work, all for no payment. The facilities provided by The Society of Wildlife Artists for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', and the sponsorship by The Famous Grouse Scotch Whisky of 'Bird Photograph of the Year' make it possible for us to continue these two competitions, which we regard as having very important roles in encouraging budding wildlife artists and photographers as well as providing a showcase for those who have achieved distinction.

We should like to express our thanks to all those who help *BB* in these ways, and perhaps especially to those who do things behind the scenes, such as Robert Gillmor who mounts the displays for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'; the artists who have allowed us to use their drawings for our subscription leaflets (Michael Hampton for Great Crested Grebe, and Blackbird on peartree, and Norman Arlott for Night Heron) and in advertisements; the custodians of the RSPB library, Ian Dawson and Chris Harbard, who always willingly answer our queries; Joy Danter, who has helped by sorting card files; and Rob Hume and others who have given lectures or run mystery photograph competitions at conferences on behalf of *BB*. Thank you everyone! Eds

Photographic requests

Requirements for black-and-white prints We recently published a request concerning the black-and-white reproduction of colour transparencies of rarities in the annual 'Report on rare birds' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 138-139). We should now like to follow this with a brief summary of our general requirements for black-and-white prints, whether to illustrate papers, for the 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' feature or for 'Recent reports'. Both we and our printers are anxious that reproduction of photographs should be of the highest quality. Adherence by photographers to the following guide-lines will help us to achieve the best results.

The original photograph should, of course, be of a high standard: in sharp focus, well exposed and with the main subject of reasonable size. Glossy prints of average contrast are the most satisfactory for reproduction; where possible, the picture size should leave some background around the bird, so that cropping is possible to suit the page layout. Try to envisage whether the photograph will occupy one column of the page, or two, and whether a vertical or horizontal format will be most appropriate. The ideal print will not require more than 30% reduction prior to reproduction, and

will, therefore, not be much larger than, say, 20 cm × 25 cm (8 in × 10 in) for a full page and proportionately smaller for half-page or single column width reproduction.

Finally, please write, on the reverse of the print in soft pencil: (1) your name and address, (2) details of the subject, (3) the month and year when the photograph was taken, and (4) the county (or, if abroad, the country). If the print is placed on a glass sheet, no marks will be made on the photograph when these details are written on the back.

Photographs needed for ‘British Birds’ The list is in two parts: (i) photographs required urgently to illustrate articles that are due to be published in the next few months, and (ii) longer-term requirements, where photographs are needed not only for illustration, but also to aid in the preparation of papers, particularly where these deal with identification. Glossy black-and-white prints of medium contrast are preferred, but it may be possible to prepare black-and-white prints from colour originals.

(i) URGENT REQUIREMENTS:

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: black-headed race *M. f. feldegg* and grey-headed *M. f. thunbergi*
 Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*
 Serin *Serinus serinus* and (wild) Canary *S. canaria*, and similar ‘confusion’ species which may occur as escapes
 Spotted *Porzana porzana*, Little *P. parva* and Baillon’s Crakes *P. pusilla*

(ii) LONGER-TERM REQUIREMENTS:

Divers *Gavia*: winter plumages and in flight
 Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* in flight
 Cory’s *Calonectris diomedea*, Little *Puffinus assimilis* and Audubon’s Shearwaters *P. l’herminieri* in flight
 Leach’s Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
 Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*
 Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
 Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* of the American race *hudsonius* (known as ‘Marsh Hawk’): female or immature plumage
 Pallid *C. macrourus* and Montagu’s Harriers *C. pygargus*: all plumages, but especially females and immatures
 Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, photographed in the UK
 Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*
 Stints (peeps) *Calidris*: especially Red-necked *C. ruficollis* and Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta*
 Dowitchers *Limnodromus*
 Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*
 Polynesian *Heteroscelus brevipes* and Wandering Tattlers *H. incanus*
 Skuas (jaegers) *Stercorarius*, especially in flight
 Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*
 Glaucous *L. hyperboreus* and Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides*
 Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Caspian *Sterna caspia*, Royal *S. maxima*, Lesser Crested *S. bengalensis* and Elegant Terns *S. elegans*
 Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*: immature
 Bridled *S. anaethetus* and Sooty Terns *S. fuscata*, including immatures
 Dunn’s Lark *Eremalauda dunnii*
 Blyth’s *Anthus godlewskii* and Tawny Pipits *A. campestris*
 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
 All wheatears *Oenanthe*, especially females and immatures, including White-crowned Black
 Wheatcar *O. leucopyga*

Blyth's Reed *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Marsh Warblers *A. palustris*

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*

Spectacled *Sylvia conspicillata* and Subalpine Warblers *S. cantillans*, especially females and immatures

Phylloscopus warblers: all west Palearctic species

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Two-barred (White-winged) Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*

We shall also be delighted to receive appropriate photographs for the occasional feature on 'Birds in action', and for a proposed photographic feature on 'Birds in winter'.
RJC & DS

Announcements

'The RSPB Book of British Birds' This new basic guide, by Peter Holden, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Hilary Burn, is still available to *BB* readers through British BirdShop (see page vii), post free (in UK & Eire) and at £1.00 less than the full price.

Spotted Redshank

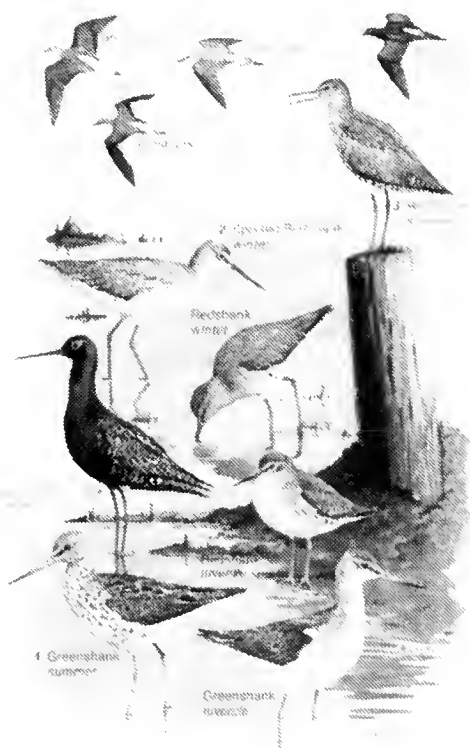
Spotted Redshank

Redshank

Redshank

Greenshank

Greenshank



Advertising in 'British Birds' We are most grateful to Macmillan Journals Ltd for continuing to administer the advertising in *BB* during the two years since we became independent in August 1980. As from 1st August 1982, however, all advertising will be dealt with by our new Advertising Manager, David Christie. Correspondence on advertising matters should be addressed to him personally at: BB Advertising, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ; David Christie's telephone number is Huntingdon (0480) 861277.

News and comment

Bob Spencer and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Where have all the Whitethroats gone? It is eight years since a paper was published under that title, suggesting that the catastrophic decline in the population of Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* which occurred throughout western Europe between 1968 and 1969 was due to drought in the Sahel. Certain puzzles remain. For example, the drought was progressive, and spread over about seven years, but the population collapse was abrupt. The severe phase of the drought ended about seven years ago, but, taking the country as a whole, the Whitethroat population has never recovered, the Common Birds Census revealing a population level still only about one-third of what it was before the crash. What has prevented a recovery, for we know that song-bird populations can make good the losses of a severe winter in three or four years? Perhaps one clue lies in the fact that the southern boundary of the Sahara is now reported to be 200 km to the south of where it was in 1963. Thus, a migrant crossing the Sahara faces a 1,800-km rather than a 1,600-km non-stop flight. Yet that cannot be the sole explanation, for all trans-Saharan migrants have presumably had their journeys lengthened in the same way. This rather suggests that, for the Whitethroat, the trouble really does lie in its winter quarters, rather than in the journey to or from the winter quarters. Such an explanation might account for the regional differences of Whitethroat abundance in Britain, for observers in some counties are reporting the species to be much more common than in recent years, while others regard it as still very scarce. This in turn suggests that populations which breed together winter together. It would be important to prove this, but the work would call for expensive expeditions to Africa and would require West European co-operation. The French have a small but wholly admirable programme of research into Palearctic migrants wintering in Francophone Africa. It would be good to see a comparable British effort in the former British territories of West Africa.

European co-operation Plans have been announced for the EEC's first-ever Inte-

grated Development Programme. Some £8 million will come from Community sources, the remainder from the British tax-payer, and the object of all this spending is to improve the quality of life of the residents of the Outer Hebrides. What right have those of us whose lives are blessed with every modern amenity to begrudge the islander his share? None at all, and yet conservationists cannot but express their concern. For example, much money is to be spent on agriculture, a special aim being to 'improve' the machair, or sandy coastal grasslands. These, research has shown, carry some of the highest wader breeding densities in western Europe. Amongst other matters for which grants will be available is pest control. If the pests were feral mink *Mustela vison*, perhaps there would be no worries, but we understand that the resident Greylag Geese *Anser anser*—not to be confused with the feral populations of England and southern Scotland—are regarded as pests. It is even suggested that the Eider *Somateria mollissima* might be regarded as a pest, on the grounds that it competes with man for mussels.

Swiss migration studies Vogelwarte Sempach, perhaps best described as the Swiss BTO/RSPB, has just announced the opening of a new bird observatory, at Bolle di Magadino, in the Tessin, and a call has gone out to Swiss ringers to help to man it during the critical months of August and September. With six other Alpine observatories, of which the most famous is the Col de Bretolet, and an integrated radar programme, the Swiss are making a concerted attempt to document and understand the pattern of bird migration through the Alps. British and Irish migration enthusiasts would ask for nothing better than to be able to participate in a carefully planned study of a similar nature. It could be expensive, and unfortunately no-one who controls a purse is prepared to give a lead. Yet there is a formula under which expense could be justified, for the EEC Directive on birds does require the Member States to make provision for migrating birds. How can one provide for a species about which one is ill-informed?

Computerisation is fun . . . Apart from duplicating some addresses, the 'software bugs' in *BB*'s new home-computer included its unwillingness to give anyone more than one initial letter before their surname. S. Cramp will have been well satisfied; M. A. Ogilvie probably did not mind being M. Ogilvie; and we suspect that Sir Hugh Elliott and Dr Ian Newton turned not a hair at being called S. Elliott and D. Newton, respectively. We wonder, however, what the recipients felt at The British Museum when their copy arrived addressed to 'T. Museum'. Were there any even more hilarious examples?

New recorder for Fife and Kinross-shire

I. G. Cumming, 11 Canongate, St Andrews, Fife, has taken over from Keith Brockie as recorder for Fife (except Forth islands) and Kinross-shire.

Death in France

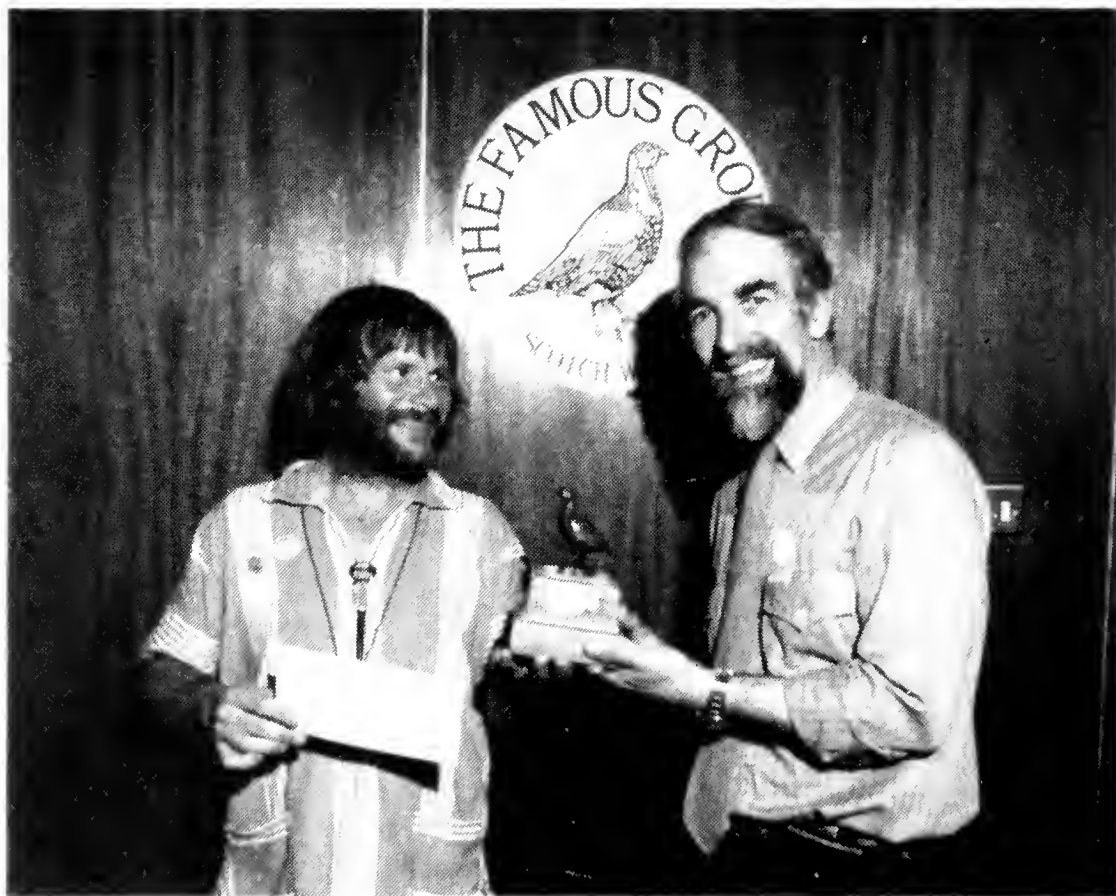
A French protection organisation has been studying the causes of death of protected bird species, and has published the results in the April-June issue of *L'Homme et l'Oiseau*. In a sample of 354 deaths of protected birds, 4% died through oiling, 4.9% were destroyed by electricity power lines, 7.2% were snared or trapped, 37.1%

died through collision with vehicles (a reflection of French driving? How do our figures compare?) while 41.6% were shot. The legislation is there to protect the birds: it is the enforcement which is lacking.

The Ribble Marshes The Nature Conservancy Council has secured a reserve agreement which has added a further 297 acres (120 ha) to the famous Ribble Estuary reserve. The total area of the reserve is now 5,688 acres (2,300 ha).

Bird Photograph of the Year The Press Reception at The Scotch Whisky Association in London on 1st June was attended not only by our guest of honour, Bill Oddie, and the winning photographer, Dennis Coutts (plate 168), but also by other photographers whose transparencies were short-listed. The four judges—Eric Hosking, Dr Richard Chandler, Don Smith and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock—greatly enjoy this annual opportunity to meet leading bird-photographers. As last year, the competition was sponsored by *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky, and we were delighted that Matthew Gloag, representing the proprietors, Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, attended this year's Reception. (JTRS)

168. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: Presentation of Red Grouse trophy and cheque to the winning photographer, Dennis Coutts, by Bill Oddie, June 1982 (Don Smith)



Our birthday *BB*'s 75th anniversary, on 1st June this year, fell, by a happy coincidence, on the same day as the Press Reception for the presentation of the award for Bird Photograph of the Year. The opportunity was taken to combine the celebrations, and, as well as all the members of the present editorial board, a distinguished company assembled, including past editors of *BB* (P. F. Bonham, P. A. D. Hollom, Eric Hosking, E. M. Nicholson and J. D. Wood); representatives of our printers, Henry Burt & Son Ltd (including the Managing Director, Charles Latimer); and friends from other publishing houses (Julian Ashby of Macmillan London Ltd, Sue Jacquemier of Usborne Publishing, and Trevor Poyser of T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd) and from the BTO (Dr Raymond O'Connor, Bob Spencer, Cecil Plant and Gwen Bonham); lots of people who help *BB* in a variety of ways; and, of course, Bernard King ('King of the Short Notes', as he is affectionately dubbed, whose 75th birthday does, we understand, fall not long after *BB*'s).

Aside from a summary of *BB*'s history by Stanley Cramp, the highlight of the gathering was, perhaps, the magnificent birthday cake (plate 169) supplied by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, our hosts.

We were delighted to receive this telegram: 'Very best wishes from *Scottish Birds* to *British Birds* on your 75th anniversary. PARUS CRISTATUS'; and letters from the Editor of *Irish Birds*: 'As a subscriber for fifteen years I am aware of the importance of *BB* for both



169. *British Birds*' 75th birthday cake (Don Smith)

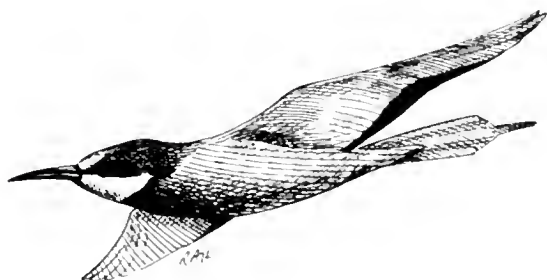
British and Irish ornithology . . . I know how much *BB* has taken care to cover Irish issues and problems . . . I wish you well. CLIVE HUTCHINSON', and from the President of the BTO: 'May I, on behalf of the Trust—now approaching its Golden Jubilee—send congratulations and greetings to *British Birds* on reaching the age of seventy-five. The fact that the journal shows no signs of old age, and indeed has acquired a new and vigorous personality, augurs well for the future. I am sure that Harry Witherby would be proud of the way in which the journal he founded has developed. MICHAEL TAYLOR.' (JTRS)

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates in the following report refer to June unless otherwise stated. For the first seven days of the month, an anticyclone close-by to



the east fed in warm, dry air from the south. Thereafter, the high pressure moved north, and depressions began to cross from the west.

bringing in cooler air. The slow-moving weather fronts brought very heavy thunderstorms, which resulted in one of the wettest Junes on record.

Hérons and wading birds

Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* continued a good spring, with two at Spurn Point (Humberside) on 4th, three at Elmley (Kent) on 6th, one on the Exe (Devon) on 8th, when three turned up for a four-day stay at Walney Island (Cumbria), another in the Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire) on 9th, singles at Eye Brook Reservoir (Leicestershire) and Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 12th, then two at the latter locality on 28th, and at Benacre (Suffolk) from 21st into July. **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* occurred on the River Otter (Devon) on 1st (two), at Eye Brook Reservoir on 5th and at Benacre from 19th to 24th. A **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* remained at Minsmere (Suffolk) from 1st to 4th and **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* reached the River Otter on 2nd and, later, Radipole Lake (Dorset). Single **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* stalked around at Dunwich (Suffolk) on 5th and Sandwich Bay on 12th. Spurn Point clocked up another rarity in the form of a

Tringa stagnatilis was at Ditchford (Northamptonshire) on 4th July. On that date, there were already 30 **Spotted Redshanks** *T. erythropus* and a **Little Stint** *C. minuta* at Minsmere. Earlier, a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* had been on Fetlar (Shetland) from 27th to 31st May.

Gulls, terns and skuas

A boat returning from Inner Farne (Northumberland) on 28th May was all but capsized when a summer-plumage **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* flew by, but the observers survived to report it in glowing terms to very envious listeners! A **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* was on Fetlar from 22nd into early July and was equally well-received. More expected were **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus*, including one at Redcar (Cleveland) on 29th and up to eight at Sandwich Bay all month. A wandering **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* passed Cley (Norfolk) on 3rd July and earlier a **Caspian Tern** *S. caspia* visited Blacktoft Sands (Humberside). More exciting still, but potentially the source of much heated discussion, were three terns, beginning with one at Greencastle (Co. Down) from 19th. This is widely held to be



Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* on 30th May. **Greater Sand Plovers** *Charadrius leschenaultii* continue to appear: one was found at Aberlady Bay (Lothian) on 24th, a candidate for bird of the month. An interesting (but not quite unparalleled) report of a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was of one in Dunlin *C. alpina* breeding territory at Allendale (Northumberland) on 16th May. Yet another **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* appeared, at Minsmere from 3rd to 5th July, and a **Marsh Sandpiper**

the first **Elegant Tern** *S. elegans* for the western Palearctic, but there are those who argue equally strongly that it was a **Royal Tern** *S. maxima*. Others claimed as Royal were at Prawle Point (Devon) about 23rd and, briefly, at Dungeness on 26th. It might be noted that at least two previous Royal Terns in Britain, including one in South Wales which was proved to be such by the ring it was carrying, were initially thought to be too small. A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* at Worthing (West Sussex) on 22nd and 23rd

was equally remarkable. Two **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* were found: at Chelmarsh Reservoir (Shropshire) on 1st and at Benacre on 24th and 25th. Skuas included one **Long-tailed Stercorarius longicaudus** at Dawlish Warren (Devon) on 16th and a **Pomarine S. pomarinus** at Sandwich Bay on 28th.

Raptors

A **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* graced Fetlar from 1st to 18th. **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were at Spurn Point on 4th and Sandwich Bay on 27th. An immature female **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was watched near Shrewsbury (Shropshire) from 13th to 19th.

Passerines and near-passerines

Scandinavian migrants and birds overshooting from the south both added to the excellence of the month. **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* occurred at Filey Brigg and nearby Atwick (Humberside) on 18th May, at Spurn Point on 20th May and on St Martins (Scilly) on 9th and 10th. A **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* was noted at Galashiels (Lothian) from 28th into July. **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* complete a spectacular trio: there was one at Newton Harcourt (Leicestershire) on 5th, one at Eye Brook Reservoir on 13th, two at Stodmarsh (Kent) from 7th to 13th and two on Romney Marsh (Kent) from 12th to 13th. **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* were found at Wath Ings (North Yorkshire) on 22nd and at Woodbridge (Suffolk) on 4th July. A **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* was at Spurn Point on 1st. Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) recorded its first spring **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* on 28th May, and a **Melodious Warbler** *H. polyglotta* reached Sandwich Bay on 3rd July. On 3rd there was a **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* at Spurn, followed next day by a **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*, which stayed



until 6th. **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were noted at Workington (Cumbria) on 22nd May (a white-spotted male) and on Fetlar on 24th May. A **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was a good find in Oxen Park, Furness (Cumbria) on 2nd. **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* turned up on Fetlar from 4th to 5th and on Bardsey Island (Gwynedd) on 7th, while three more late-May reports of **Lesser Grey Shrikes** *L. minor*—in Dyfed, Powys and Huntingdonshire—add to the two already reported. Bardsey Island also had an



extreme rarity in the distinctive form of a **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* on 5th and 6th. A **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* was at Easington (Humberside), near Spurn, from 13th to 19th. A **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* put in an untimely appearance at Spurn on 13th, the same day that an **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* was 'just up the road' at Kilnsea (Humberside). **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrurus* were at Spurn on 29th May and 5th, on Bardsey on 30th May and on Fetlar on 3rd, and a single **Serin** *Serinus serinus* was reported, at Prawle Point on 20th.



Finally, a **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* was at Portrush (Co. Antrim) late in the month; there were four **Snowy Owls** *Nyctea scandiaca* on Fetlar—sadly all females, though to the considerable relief of the warden perhaps!—and **Quails** *Coturnix coturnix* turned up at Sandwich Bay from 1st to 12th, on Fetlar on 10th and in the Spurn area on 6th, when there were five, as well as at various potential breeding sites.

Latest news

The first half of August was very quiet in the south, with only **White Stork** at Minsmere, **Melodious Warbler** at Portland (Dorset) and **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at Lodmoor (Dorset); but Fair Isle (Shetland) produced Britain's first **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*, in summer plumage, and a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*.

Short reviews

Birds of North Munster. By **Phil Brennan and Ewart Jones.** (Irish Wildbird Conservancy, £1.70) This 56-page ten-year report covers the counties of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, together with the northern part of Kerry bordering the Shannon Estuary. It forms a companion volume to other Irish Wildbird Conservancy publications on *The Birds of Dublin and Wicklow* and *Birds of Galway and Mayo*. Its publication was sponsored by 15 firms involved in the construction of the largest industrial complex in Ireland, at Aughinish on the Shannon Estuary. **Die Vogelberingung auf Helgoland von 1930 bis 1944.** By **Hans Bub and Margaretha Klings.** (Vogelwarte Helgoland, 1981. DM20.00) The birds ringed on Helgoland tabulated by species, sex and age for five-day periods. Available from Frau M. Klings, Postfach 628D, 2192 Helgoland, West Germany. **Birds of the World: a checklist.** By **James Clements.** (Croom Helm, 1981. £11.95) This is the third edition of the book first published in 1974. The errors pointed out, by, for instance, Dr Kenneth C. Parkes (*The Auk* 92: 818-830), seem to have been corrected. It was perhaps mere chance, therefore, that the first three items which I looked up all contained errors, either typographical or factual; I did not look up a fourth. **Birdwatch Round Britain.** By **Robert Dougall and Herbert Axell.** (Collins & Harvill Press, 1982. £8.95) What a nice idea to have accounts of their favourite bird reserves, described in 24 separate chapters, selected by one of Britain's best known media-birdmen, Robert Dougall, and one of Britain's most respected bird-reserve professionals, Herbert Axell. Clearly drawn maps show the locations of the features of the various reserves, but are more useful for

reference after you know the area reasonably well than for finding your way to it or around it on first arrival. Eleven of the 12 magnificently reproduced photographs show watery habitats (a true reflection of the authors' choices, and not dissimilar from the bias in the selection of Britain's bird reserves). The texts provide informative but also evocative word pictures of the places and, in many cases, their historical background. Attractively produced and with chapter headings (and sometimes endings) drawn by Robert Gillmor, this book will doubtless prove useful to a large number of people who wish to travel to see the splendour of Britain's many bird reserves. **The Birds of Nigeria.** By **J. H. Elgood.** (British Ornithologists' Union Check-list No. 4, 1982. £14.00) Essential work of reference for any birdwatcher in or visiting Nigeria, with an average of five lines of text covering status and distribution within Nigeria for each of 831 species. There is a map showing the important birdwatching areas, a gazetteer and a comprehensive introduction, covering topography, geology, climate, habitats, bird migration and breeding. **Birds of Prey.** By **Emma Ford.** (Batsford, 1982. Paperback, £2.25) A 64-page 'insight into the sport of falconry.' **Aves Brasileiras (volume 1).** By **Johan Dalgas Frisch, illustrated by the late Svend Frisch.** (Dalgas-Ecoltec, 1981. US\$29.95, Deluxe edition \$49.95) The richness of the South American avifauna is amply demonstrated by the colour illustrations of 1,076 species shown on the 121 plates (one to 22 species per plate, average nine). Volume 1 includes no individual text for each species, but scientific and English names face the illustrations and there are comprehensive

indexes, again including English names, which would allow British or North American visitors to Brazil to make full use of the book. This is also assisted by an addendum, providing an English translation of the main parts of the original Portuguese text. The illustrations are the result of 30 years' work by the late Svend Frisch, the author's father. **The Thick-billed Murres of Prince Leopold Island: a study of the breeding ecology of a colonial high Arctic seabird.** By A. J. Gaston and D. N. Nettleship. (Canadian Wildlife Service, 1981. \$37.50) This lavish, colour-illustrated monograph (the sixth in a Canadian Wildlife Service series) would, perhaps, sit happier within the pages of *The Ibis* than between glossy hard covers. There are ten pages of references and 65 pages of appendices, apart from 126 figures (mostly graphs). Brünnich's Guillemot huffs and anyone interested in the biology of Arctic species will clearly wish to refer to this book. **Collins British Birds.** By John Gooders, with paintings by Terence Lambert. (Collins, 1982. £12.95) With well-chosen authors for specialist chapters (Peter Grant on identification, Eric Simms on songs and calls, Ian Prestt on habitats, Dr Jim Flegg on nests and nesting, Dr Philip Burton on food and feeding, Dr Colin Harrison on range and distribution, Robert Spencer on migration and movement, and Richard Porter on birds and the law), there are parts of this book from which the beginner will get a good grounding in ornithology. The main 289 pages, however, are devoted to species-accounts (usually one species per page). The texts are a competent synthesis of previously published information, as one has come to expect of John Gooders. The main paintings, however, seem inappropriate for a work of this sort, designed, as it obviously is, for the beginner. The artistic merit of the paintings is not for me to dispute in this review, but the choice of weird postures, often wholly failing to show a species' typical jizz and frequently placing the bird in a position which does not display its main identification characteristics, does turn this from a potentially valuable guide into a volume which I cannot recommend to its intended purchasers. The small, subsidiary paintings by Norman Arlott would almost always be of much greater value to the book's user than Terence Lambert's large, purely decorative pictures (greatly reminding me of the work of Raymond Ching). One hopes that other publishers will learn a lesson from this: it is not good enough to find a good artist and a good

author and to put their work together; it is essential to ensure that an artist is briefed to produce illustrations compatible with the aims of the book. For a book requiring identification to be illustrated, an artist should be chosen whose previous work has shown him to be knowledgeable and competent as an illustrator in this specialised field. **Estrildid Finches of the World.** By Derek Goodwin, with colour plates by Martin Woodcock. (Oxford University Press, 1982. £25.00) This is Derek Goodwin's third mammoth and authoritative monograph of a single group of birds (following his *Pigeons and Doves* and *Crozes*). This time, he has taken a group well known to aviculturists but little known to European field observers: the fire-tails and grassfinches of Australia, the waxbills and firefinches of Africa, and the munias, avadavats and parrot finches of the Orient and Australasia. Only eight species in the Estrildidae are included in Voous's *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*, of which three scrape into the west Palearctic list. Ornithologists with any interest at all in this group of birds will find Derek Goodwin's book essential; as with his two previous group-monographs, this will be the standard work for many years. **Eric Hosking's Owls.** By Eric Hosking with Jim Flegg. (Pelham Books, London, 1982. £12.95) With over 100 colour and 90 black-and-white photographs, it is not being unfair to Dr Jim Flegg to say that the majority of purchasers of this book will be buying it in order to obtain Eric Hosking's contribution. The owls featured are a good representative selection of the world's species, but there is no pretence to illustrate them all. The text gives a good general introduction to this popular group of birds and there are also special chapters on 'The Tawny Owl in close-up' and 'The Barn Owl in close-up'. It is the magnificent photographs, however, which catch the eye, the vast majority of them photographed by the senior author and a number by his son, David Hosking. **The Complete Manual of Nature Photography.** By Guglielmo Izzì and Francesco Mezzatesta. (Gollancz, 1981. £9.95). Remarkably similar to Michael Freeman's *Wildlife and Nature Photography* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 549), it covers the whole field of natural history photography in an almost-equally comprehensive manner. Indeed, the two books appear to have been written to almost precisely the same specification. My personal preference is marginally in favour of Freeman's book, in spite of its extra cost. [R. J. Chandler] **The Easy Way to Bird**

Recognition. By **John Kilbracken.** (Kingfisher Books, 1982. £3.50) The introduction states: 'This book has only one purpose—to make it easier than ever before to identify, as quickly as possible, all the birds that you are most likely to see in the British Isles.' This it attempts to do by the use of a key consisting of 290 questions and answers which, theoretically, should lead to the correct identification of one or other of the 184 species featured in the book. Unfortunately, not only does this system fail to teach a beginner the basic essentials of bird identification (first decide which family it is), but it also leads to incorrect identifications (a 'test case' of a Greenfinch led, via the key, to Yellow Wagtail: maybe we went wrong somewhere, but then so too, perhaps, would have a beginner). Some of the illustrations are not too bad, but others are almost unidentifiable. There is perhaps a niche for a book of this sort in the bird identification market, but the basis of the key should be natural and not artificial (the first three questions are: 'Was it a landbird or a waterbird?', 'What size was it?' and 'What colour was it?').

Proceedings, Second International Swan Symposium. Sapporo, Japan. 21st-22nd February 1980. Edited by G. V. T. Matthews and M. Smart. (International Waterfowl Research Bureau, Slimbridge, 1981. £8.00) Collection of 54 papers and shorter contributions from professionals and amateurs covering virtually all aspects of northern-hemisphere swans, with just two on the Black Swan. Some are just short progress reports, but others include important results from many different research projects. [MAO]

Der Bartkauz. By **Heimo Mikkola.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 538, A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1981. DM 13.60) Another monograph in this excellent series (text wholly in German), this one covering the Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa*.

The Trees of Britain and Northern Europe. By **Alan Mitchell. Illustrated by John Wilkinson.** (Collins, 1982. Hardback, £6.95; paperback, £3.95) This identification guide to the 600 species most likely to be found in Britain and northern Europe is even more convenient to use than the author's previous *A Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* (1974), with colour illustrations scattered throughout the text, which is, however, considerably shorter and set at a rather more popular level.

Birds in the Garden. By **Mike Mockler.** (Blandford Press, 1982. £8.95) There are some lovely colour-photographs by the author, some showing such interesting

things as a sequence of nest completion by a Wren and interspecific aggression between Blue Tit and Great Tit. The text ranges over a variety of topics. The identification section is rendered largely useless, since only some of the species are illustrated (presumably those of which the author had photographs), and there are some strange inclusions (e.g. Black Redstart, presumably, in this case, because the author did happen to have photographs). Well printed and attractively produced, but for whom? Like so many bird books these days (the good, the mediocre and the appalling), there seems to have been no clear idea in the publisher's mind of the purpose which the book would serve nor for whom it would be valuable; merely, perhaps, the thought that birds are popular and that, therefore, bird books will sell. Personally, I prefer a book with a clear purpose; this one, however, will do no harm and might interest some budding birdwatcher and encourage him to progress to more-disciplined works of reference.

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book. By **Bill Oddie.** (Eyre Methuen, 1982. Paperback, £1.50) This magnificent, hilarious and perceptive book is now available in paperback.

Estimating Numbers of Terrestrial Birds. Edited by **C. John Ralph and J. Michael Scott.** (Cooper Ornithological Society, 1981. \$20.00) This thick volume (630 pages) is the Proceedings of a most important international symposium held at Asilomar, California, during 26th-31st October 1980. The papers are arranged under the titles of 'Estimating relative abundance', 'Estimating birds per unit area', 'Comparison of methods', 'Species variability', 'Environmental influences', 'Observer variability', 'Sampling design', 'Data analysis' and ten 'Overviews'. While this volume will not be of general interest to the majority of readers of *British Birds*, it is an essential work of reference for anyone working seriously in the fields of bird surveys or bird censuses.

Die Sperbergrasmücke. By **Egon Schmidt.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 542, A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1981. DM 6.80) A rather thinner volume than usual (only 80 pages) in this valuable German series, this one covering the Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*.

The Complete Book of Budgerigars. By **John Scoble.** (Blandford Press, 1981. £8.95) 144 glossy pages.

Proceedings, First Technical Meeting on Western Palearctic Migratory Bird Management. *Branta bernicla bernicla.* Edited by **M. Smart.** (International Waterfowl Research Bureau, 1979. £5.00) Although mainly

devoted to the dark-bellied race of the Brent Goose, and the problems that its recent massive increase in numbers has caused for farmers and conservationists, the 27 papers include interesting comparative information on the light-bellied race in North America. [MAO] **Birdwatch.** By **Tony Soper, with illustrations by Robert Gillmor.** (Webb & Bower, 1982. £9.95). Do we really need yet another general book about birds and birdwatching? Well, maybe this is not an essential purchase for any birder, but it *is* a very competent job of work and *is* written in a most interesting style, filled with fascinating facts presented in a digestible manner. The illustrations—both colour photographs and colour paintings—are well chosen, and the book's design is excellent. If this was a beginner birdwatcher's first book purchase, he or she would be heading firmly in the right direction. Recommended. **A New Guide to the Birds of Malta.** By **Joe Sultana and Charles Gauci.** (The Ornithological Society, PO Box 498, Valletta, Malta, 1982. Hardback £9.90; paperback £6.50) This successor to *A Guide to the Birds of Malta* (1975), reviewed fully in *Brit. Birds* 69: 76-77, is most welcome. It not only brings up to date our knowledge of the avifauna (which now includes the amazing total of 355 species, of which only some 18 breed), but also gives much more detail on numbers, and quanti-

fies the many threats they face. New protection legislation was introduced in 1980 to control some of the worst abuses by hunters and trappers; the urgent needs now are better enforcement, education and the development of reserves. The two authors and the artist, Rodney Ingram, are generously devoting all the proceeds to the Society for the furtherance of its magnificent conservation efforts. [SC] **Garden Wildlife: the living world of your garden.** By **Victor Taylor, Stephen Pollock, Alfred Leutscher, John F. Burton, W. R. Dolling, Michael Tweedie, William Griffiths and Robert Burton; illustrated by Phil Weare.** (Ebury Press, 1982. £7.95) With big print and pretty paintings, this is clearly aimed at a popular market; the text is, however, on the whole, reliable as well as interesting; but it is a book for browsing rather than for reference. **Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.** By **Dick Watling, illustrated by Chloë Talbot-Kelly.** (Millwood Press and Croom Helm, 1982. £25.00) A total of 124 of the 144 species recorded in the Fijian Islands groups are illustrated, and approximately two-thirds of a page of text is devoted to each of the 128 main species. Each text is divided into seven sections: identification, flight, voice, food, breeding, habitat and range, and remarks and allied species.

JTRS

Reviews

Gulls: a guide to identification. By **P. J. Grant. T. & A. D. Poyser,** Calton, 1982. 280 pages; 376 black-and-white plates; 23 distribution maps; many line-drawings. £12.00

Five papers originally published in *British Birds* between 1978 and 1981 have now been brought together in a book typical of Poyser's high standards of content and presentation. The 23 species covered remain in the original five groupings for ease of comparison. This is not a book to evoke the atmosphere of active, noisy, busy, bickering gulls, but one which seeks to present, in text, drawings and photographs, the variations in appearance of each species due to age and season with special emphasis on identification and ageing. It goes beyond simple identification—one does not need, for example, four pages purely in order to *identify* a Black-headed Gull—instead the book provides detailed descriptions of each significant plumage, indicates the timing and extent of moults, the effect of bleaching and abrasion and describes in full the progression from juvenile to adulthood. Immature gull plumages generally present a logical—and not *too* difficult—series, and are not so chaotic as many observers used to think! As the author points out, gulls provide opportunities for close examination of all these factors in the field, not merely when in the hand—and they also teach the careful observer much about bird topography which can be applied elsewhere. The study of gulls, therefore, helps to develop a critical and precise approach to field observation and description which is assuming increased significance in birdwatching in general.

The more spacious format of the book has been well used, giving scope for a clearer layout

than the original *BB* papers, with the photographs in a separate section at the back. When the papers first appeared, I was surprised that the author had chosen to use line-drawings rather than the half-tone paintings which he had earlier employed with such success. The drawings are reproduced a little larger here and are thus slightly looser and paler. With such a very difficult technique for showing subtleties of tone being used, they represent a considerable triumph and a major contribution in their field. One or two may be too pale; the odd one (e.g. adult Audouin's) does not quite capture the bird—but the vast majority are superb and several plates (e.g. the Sabine's Gulls) would look well on a wall. Perhaps a few more might have been added for direct comparison of difficult pairs on the same page, but, all in all, they are very fine.

The texts and many of the maps have been updated (and a few drawings slightly modified). Photographs have been increased to 376, representing a magnificent series of great value. It is possible to sink all too easily into all sorts of tangles trying to describe jizz and expression and variable shapes of birds in words; as the author rightly says, it is usually much better to examine a series of photographs in order to grasp such elements of their appearance (e.g. the differing facial appearances of Glaucous and Iceland Gulls), and he rightly avoids too much complicated text about such matters. Instead, the text concentrates on a clear summary of identification, plus a wealth of detailed plumage descriptions.

The thoroughness of research and cross-checking which went into the production of this book must have been a huge task: with over 260 people acknowledged, we can appreciate the volume of correspondence, much of it international, which has been going on! Yet the list of references is disappointingly short. How much more work will be stimulated by this book remains to be seen; plenty, I hope, but it seems to be pretty well all here already. R. A. HUME

The Breeding Birds of Europe 2: a photographic handbook. Sandgrouse to Crows. By Manfred Pforr and Alfred Limbrunner. Croom Helm, London, 1982. 394 pages; over 500 colour plates; over 180 line-drawings; 180 coloured distribution maps. £17.95.

Some bird books are clearly lightweight and their authors and publishers do not really expect them to be taken seriously. Among those which do aim for higher things, however, this volume (the second in a two-volume work) would, in any competition, receive my award of the wooden spoon. The text is mundane and gives virtually no help on identification, yet is so relatively brief that it also does not give a good grounding in aspects of each species' biology. The distribution maps contain many small inaccuracies, and some of them are just plainly wrong. The first volume (see *Brit. Birds* 75: 192-193) omitted a number of common species, apparently merely because photographs of them were not available to the compilers; in this second volume, the publishers do not make the mistake that they made in the first of listing these species for the benefit of reviewers. It is, however, easy to spot that the Siskin is given subsidiary treatment on the Redpoll page and merits only one photograph, whereas the white-spotted and red-spotted races of the Bluethroat are given two double-page spreads and a total of eight photographs, two maps and two tables. An English-language bird book, even if it does have 'Europe' in its title, should surely illustrate the yellow-headed British race of the Yellow Wagtail, yet this book has a double-page spread for *M. f. flava*, a double-page spread for *M. f. thunbergi*, and a double-page spread for *M. f. feldegg*, but just nine words (apart from its name) for *M. f. flavissima*. The entry for Thekla Lark tells its hopeful identifier the valuable information that it is 'very similar' to Crested Lark, but that the song is 'different'. Those interested in Aquatic Warbler and Moustached Warbler will also learn little except that both species occur in habitats similar to those of the Sedge Warbler and the ranges overlap in some areas.

Generally, I support the principle that a long review is wasted on a bad book. In this case, however, the design and standard of production are such that, at first sight, this volume seems excellent. Those attempting to use its text or maps will, however, depending upon their degree of competence, be either misled or disappointed.

Nevertheless, this book is not all bad. The colour photographs are, in many cases, splendidly reproduced, and I have already found volume 1 useful as a photographic reference. The high price, however, makes it unlikely that it will be purchased solely for this purpose. What a pity that the publishers did not ensure that the text matched the illustrations. J. T. R. SHARROCK

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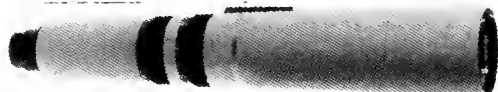
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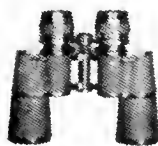
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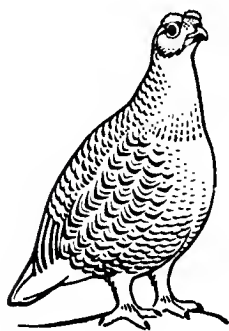
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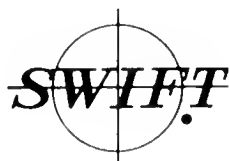


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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 10 OCTOBER 1982

The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year

For the benefit of those who may wish to acquire (or give as a present) just one of the many bird books published each year, *British Birds* selects annually its choice of the 'Best Bird Book of the Year' from those reviewed in the journal during the previous 12 months. The winner may, in one year, be an important, erudite scientific treatise and, in another, a lighter, less academic work, but it will always be reliable, well produced and thoroughly worthy of inclusion in any birdwatcher's library.

Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1982 is

An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palearctic. By Colin Harrison. Collins, London. £12.95. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 75: 480)

Bird-books for children



Nowadays, the High Street bookshops are filled with innumerable bird-books—often small and usually glossy—intended to be bought for children. It is not easy for the non-birdwatcher to distinguish between the good ones and the bad ones, for the standard of production (as distinct from content) is, in general, very high. Yet most of the books must be purchased by people whose knowledge of birds is only slight (either the children themselves, or relatives and friends who know of but do not necessarily share the children's hobby).

Following on our surveys of binoculars and telescopes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439, and in prep.) and photographic equipment (*Brit. Birds* 75: 147-153), we have now directed our attention to bird-books for children. We

hope that our recommendations will help the publishers of the good books and may influence the publishers of the bad ones towards improving their product, since the main failings of the latter must derive from poor advice by an ornithological consultant (or the failure of the publishers to consult an ornithologist at all). A bad bird-book costs just as much to produce as does a good one; publishers and public would both gain by the elimination of the unsatisfactory bird-books; for, surely, no publisher starts out with the aim of publishing a poor book?

All the well-known publishers of children's bird-books were invited to submit copies of their current titles and, as a result, 40 books were received for review in this feature.

The opinions of children themselves are very important: however superb it may appear to an adult, a particular book is of little value if it is not liked by its intended owner. All the books were, therefore, reviewed by a small panel consisting of four children, all keen members of the Young Ornithologists' Club, and one adult:

Kieran Sharrock (age 10)

Ian Munro (age 12)

Lorna Sharrock (age 13)

Katherine Yates (age 14)

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock

The members of the Panel read the books completely independently, allocated each to one of four grades of merit, assessed the age-groups to which each would appeal, and noted good and bad points of each one. The following list is arranged into two categories, the first covering those books of which the Panel especially approved and the second ranging from those considered to be less good to those rated as 'awful!'. Within each category, the books are listed in the order of the age of their potential readers (age-ranges were calculated merely by taking the five ranges estimated by the Panel members and excluding the single lowest and the single highest figures; e.g. 5-9, 4-8, 4-10, 4-11 and 6-10 would, after elimination of one 4 and the 11, be listed as '4-10 years'). The Panel's votes (A, B, C or D) are arranged in the sequence of the members' ages (see above).

A = Very good; B = Quite good; C = Poor; D = Awful!

The best bird-books for children

The following 18 books are all highly recommended.

BAAAA (3-6 years) **Topsy and Tim Can Help the Birds** By Jean & Gareth Adamson. Blackie, 1982. 24 pages. Paperback, 95p.

We all agreed with Kieran that this story included 'Lots of nice ideas for making things.'

BAABA (4-8 years) **Barn Owl** By Phyllis Flower. Pictures by Cherryl Pape. World's Work Ltd, 1978. 62 pages. £2.95.

'A Science I CAN READ Book.' This simple story, without anthropomor-

phism, has, as Ian commented, 'Very good drawings, and very easy words.'

BABAA (4-9 years) **Usborne First Nature: Birds** By Rosamund Kidman Cox and Barbara Cork. Usborne, 1980. 24 pages. Hardback, £2.25; paperback, 90p.

Crammed with colour pictures, questions and their answers, all interestingly presented and, as Ian commented, 'Well set out.'

BABBA (5-9 years) **Migrating Birds** By Peter Gill. Dinosaur Publications, 1982. 24 pages. Hardback, £2.25; paperback, 70p.

Intelligent text, interesting illustrations, Kieran summarised the Panel's views: 'Nicely illustrated . . . told me a lot.'

AACBB (5-10 years) **Museum Puzzle-picture Book of Bird Spotting** By Harry T. Sutton. Illustrated by John Green. Heritage Books & Longman, 1982. 16 pages. Paperback, 65p.

Lorna thought the 'Pictures poor', but Kieran's view that the book had 'Nice quizzes and pictures' was shared by the rest of the Panel: we thought that the idea of asking keen youngsters to look carefully at illustrations to spot and name the birds and to find deliberate mistakes was original and rather fun.

ABABA (7-12 years) **Year of the Barn Owl** By John Andrews. Illustrated by Terry Riley. Dent, 1981. 32 pages. £3.95.

'Lovely pictures', said Lorna. This is the way in which a bird story should be written.

AAAAA (7-13 years) **Year of the Golden Eagle** By John Andrews. Illustrated by Terry Riley. Dent, 1981. 32 pages. £3.95.

We all enjoyed and thoroughly approved of this illustrated story, which cleverly avoids anthropomorphism.

BABAC (7-13 years) **Sea Birds** By A. J. Richards. Adam & Charles Black, 1982. 25 pages. £3.50.

The young potential readers all liked it: 'Lots of facts' (Kieran), 'Very good photos' (Ian), 'Lovely pictures' (Lorna), 'Easy to understand' (Katherine), so perhaps JTRS was too harsh in regarding the text as boring in contrast to the exciting photographs.

BAABB (7-14 years) **Spotter's Guide to Birds** By Peter Holden. Illustrated by Trevor Boyer. Usborne, 1978. 64 pages. Paperback, 75p.

We all liked the Spotter's Guides, but shared Katherine's criticism that it 'should have concentrated on more of the commoner birds instead of including rare ones' (e.g. White Stork, Pygmy Owl and Black Woodpecker). Despite some colour-reproduction faults (e.g. a blue Cuckoo), some illustration errors and text omissions, we liked the book and its presentation of ideas.

BAABB (7-14 years) **Spotter's Guide to Sea & Freshwater Birds** By Joe

Blossom. Illustrated by Trevor Boyer and Alan Harris. Usborne, 1981. 64 pages. Paperback, £1.25.

We liked the Spotter's Guide system of having a space for ticking each species as it is seen, but Kieran commented that there was not much text and Katherine wished that there had been something on calls and songs.

AAABA (7-15 years) **The Nature Trail Book of Woodlands** By Barbara Cork and Helen Gilks. Usborne, 1981. 32 pages. Paperback, £1.85.

We all agreed that it was crammed with interest, and the worst criticism was Katherine's 'Didn't include a lot about birdwatching.'

ABAAB (7-15 years) **The Nature Trail Book of Birdwatching** By Malcolm Hart. Illustrated by more than 11 different artists. Usborne, 1976. 32 pages. Paperback, £1.85.

'Helpful hints and nice pictures', wrote Lorna; 'Packed with nice ideas', said Kieran.

BAABA (7-15 years) **Spotter's Guide to Birds of Prey** By Peter Holden and Richard Porter. Illustrated by Ian Wallace and David Wright. Usborne, 1981. 64 pages. Paperback, £1.25.

While this is one of the best small, cheap books devoted to a single group of species, Katherine noted that 'A child is unlikely to spot many of these birds in this country.'

BABAA (7-adult) **Collins Gem Guides: Birds** By Richard Perry. Illustrated by Martin Woodcock. Collins, 1980. 240 pages. Paperback, £1.75.

'A nice book for quick reference', commented Kieran. Really handy—and really cheap!—very suitable for the beginner before he or she graduates to 'Peterson'. Katherine noted, however, that 'Some rare birds could have been omitted.'

BABBA (8-13 years) **A Garden of Birds** By Keith Snow. Illustrated by Norman Arlott. World's Work Ltd, 1981. 32 pages. £3.95.

Ian thought that it had 'Super pictures and good long info. about them.' Although Katherine didn't like the combination of large and small type in the one book, JTRS regarded this as a model of what a small book on a limited group of species (12) should be like, with good text and excellent illustrations. The price is, however, very high.

AAAAB (8-adult) **Usborne Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe** By Rob Hume. Illustrated by Alan Harris and Trevor Boyer. Usborne, 1981. 129 pages. Paperback, £2.50.

Kieran called it 'A perfect book to go home to and look up all those birds that you could not identify', while Ian noted the 'Super pictures', and Lorna thought it 'Very good indeed.' It would have got 'straight As' if JTRS had not felt that more species should have been included to make it more comprehensive for beginners.

AAABB (10-16 years) **The Young Birdwatcher** By Nicholas Hammond.

Illustrations by Ian Willis and Robert Morton. Hamlyn, 1978. 192 pages. £3.50.

As Ian said, 'Lots of information on how to start, where to go, etc.', but Katherine commented that 'The pictures are too small for identification.' The first 100 or so pages are excellent, but the last 60-odd pages, on identification, would have been better omitted.

AABBA (10-adult) **Birdwatch** By Tony Soper. Illustrated by Robert Gillmor. Webb & Bower, 1982. 208 pages. £9.95.

Kieran enthused: 'An absolutely super book. The colour pictures are smashing and I would buy it now'; and so did Ian: 'Very good info, good photos, lots to keep you interested.' Lorna noted that there was 'Not much on identification', and Katherine pointed out that, to find things out about a particular species, 'You would have to look on several different pages.' For the beginner already armed with a field guide, however, this well-illustrated, well-planned book gives excellent background information. The reproduction of the many colour photographs is first rate. Among the black-and-white photographs, two are upside-down (pages 82 and 104) and a Little Ringed Plover is miscaptioned as a Ringed Plover (page 87), but such slips can be forgiven when the rest of the book is so good.

Other books reviewed

CBBBC (1-8 years) **Swan Cove** By Jane White Canfield. Pictures by Jo Polseno. World's Work Ltd, 1978. 32 pages. £2.60.

'An early I CAN READ book', rather sickly sweet and could have been much better; Katherine thought that the story 'Would be better if set in GB and not in America.'

DBDCC (1-8 years) **All about Creatures on Islands and Things** By Althea. Dinosaur Publications, 1971. 24 pages. Paperback, 35p.

Our bottom-rated book; Lorna used just one word: 'Bad', and Ian's comment, 'I don't like the pictures', was endorsed by the rest of the Panel.

BABCC (5-8 years) **Ducks and Drakes** By Althea. Illustrated by Joe Blossom. Dinosaur Publications, 1982. 24 pages. Hardback, £2.25; paperback, 85p.

While Ian rated it as 'Good for young kids', Lorna thought that there should have been more information, and Katherine said that 'The colours are very bad.' The text seemed uninformed rather than naïve; 'Gooseander' (more than once) should not have passed any half-competent proof-reader.

BABDC (5-9 years) **Birds in the Garden** By Peter Gill. Dinosaur Publications, 1981. 24 pages. Hardback, £1.85; paperback, 70p.

At the two extremes, Ian's A was because he thought that it was 'Very good for little kids, explains where they could see the birds', whereas Katherine's D was due to her criticism that 'The shapes of the birds are not right.' It is very easy to produce a book of this sort (almost any birdwatcher could write a text as good, or better, on one rainy Saturday afternoon), so it must be well done to be worth doing. This isn't; the shapes of the birds *are* very weird in many cases. 'Missel Thrush'?—well, it *is* an alternative dictionary spelling, but the perpetuation of an outdated name presumably reflects the author's attitudes.

CACAB (5-10 years) **Younger Spotter's Guides: Birds** By Su Swallow. Illustrated by Trevor Boyer. Usborne, 1979. 32 pages. Paperback, 35p.

Lorna's criticisms were that there were 'Few birds (only 30 species) and no identification

hints.' With Cuckoo, Kingfisher and Cormorant included, one wonders why Swift, Jackdaw and Greenfinch (surely all more likely to be seen by a beginner) were omitted.

BBCB (6-10 years) **How Does Your Garden Grow?** By Jean Ellenby. Illustrated by Elsie Wrigley. Dinosaur Publications, 1979. 32 pages. Paperback, 95p.

The adult on the Panel, JTRS, thought that this book, with basic information for the young naturalist, was interestingly presented, but Lorna dismissed it as 'A bit nothing' and Katherine commented that there was 'Hardly anything about birds in it.'

CBCBA (6-11 years) **I-Spy Birds** By Big Chief I-Spy. Ravette. 48 pages. Paperback, 35p.

JTRS felt that it had 'kid-appeal' and, at its low price, must be good value. The children, however, disagreed. Kieran considered it 'Not good for reference'; Lorna thought the 'Text bad', and Ian and Katherine both commented that all of the pictures ought to have been in colour.

CBCBB (6-12 years) **Seawatching** By Tony Soper and Noel Cusa. Dinosaur Publications, 1978. 32 pages. Paperback, 80p.

JTRS thought that there was much of interest, but the children were more critical. Even among the children who also liked it, Katherine wanted truer colours and Ian thought it 'Not that interesting.' It covers not seawatching as birdwatchers understand the word, but lots of things that can be seen on and under the sea (plankton, fishes, seals and ships, as well as birds).

ABBBC (7-14 years) **Birds I** and **Birds II** Edited by Joe Firmin. Illustrated by Richard Eastland. Dinosaur Publications, I, 1976; II, 1979. 33 pages each. Paperback, 75p.

'Don't like the pictures', wrote Ian; nor did most of us. We *did* like the idea of the inclusion of double-page spreads giving a diagram of 'Parts of a bird' and text on 'How to watch birds', and spaces to write in date, time, place and weather opposite each species. But it all could have been so much better (especially the illustrations).

ABBCC (7-14 years) **Seabirds** Edited by Joe Firmin. Illustrated by Vanessa Luff. Dinosaur Publications, 1979. 33 pages. Paperback, 60p.

Same format at *Birds I* and *Birds II* (see above), but rated lower; 'Pictures very bad', wrote Katherine. Why do publishers go to the bother of producing books without finding out whether their prospective artist is capable of painting birds that look like birds?

BAABB (8-12 years) **Animals of the World: Vultures** By John Cloudsley-Thompson. Wayland, 1981. 61 pages. £3.95.

We all agreed with Ian that it was 'Well set out and keeps you interested'. Of its sort, this is a good book, but we wondered whether children in the age range catered for would want a book on such a limited subject.

CAAAB (8-15 years) **Animals of the World: Eagles** By Ewan Clarkson. Wayland, 1981. 61 pages. £3.95.

Lorna summed it up for us: 'Nice pictures, informative', but are books on limited groups of species of real value to young birders, most of whom have probably never seen an eagle?

BAABB (8-adult) **Where Wild Geese Fly** By Sheila McCullagh, with drawings by Peter Scott. Hart-Davis, 1981. 49 pages. Paperback, £1.95.

Kieran liked the 'Nice maps', Ian commented on the 'Very good photos, well set out' and Lorna regarded the text as 'Informative and interesting.' Katherine, however, thought that 'There should have been more about geese generally and not just special "pet" ones' (the Wildfowl Trust's work is the main subject). Some photographs are very small, but the main fault (as a children's book) is the limited subject; fine, however, for anyone visiting a WT reserve or collection.

BABBD (8-adult) **Granada Guides: Garden Birds** By Jean Cooke. Illustrated by Wendy Meadway, Bernard Robinson and Cecilia Fitzsimons. Granada, 1982. 63 pages. £1.95.

The young Panel members liked it, but both Lorna and Katherine used the phrase 'The pictures could be better.' Lorna also noted that the species were 'Not all garden birds!': with Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Rock Sparrow and Marsh Warbler (but no Reed Warbler),

we all had to agree; that, and the poor colour, explains why JTRS rated it so poorly.

ABACC (9-15 years) **Wonders of the World of the Albatross** By Harvey I. Fisher & Mildred L. Fisher. World's Work Ltd, 1974. 80 pages. £2.50.

Ian thought it 'A bit boring'; Katherine agreed: 'The inside looks boring as ~~no~~ colour pictures.' Surely, for its intended audience, colour photographs are an essential ingredient?

AAABC (9-17 years) **Nature's Hidden World: Birds of Prey** By Michel Cuisin. Illustrated by Carl Brenders. Kingfisher Books, Ward Lock, 1980. 41 pages. £2.95.

Big, fierce birds excite budding birders and this book got rave reviews from the three younger members: 'Many beautiful birds are in this smashing book' (Kieran); 'Very good to read' (Ian); and 'Beautiful pictures, well presented, informative' (Lorna). Katherine, however, thought that the pictures were 'Too colourful', and JTRS regretted the restricted range of species (e.g. Long-eared, Scops and Barn the only owls).

AAACD (9-adult) **The Easy Way to Bird Recognition** By John Kilbracken. Kingfisher Books, 1982. 137 pages. £3.50.

Even Ian and Lorna, who both rated it highly, said that it was 'A bit confusing' and 'Not for use in the field'. The older members of the Panel were more critical. Katherine felt it was 'A good idea, but some questions are hard to answer if a perfect view was not obtained.' The key method of identification, as used in a standard flora, is satisfactory for plants or for animals under a lens or microscope, but fails with birds, especially when the first vital question is 'Was it a land bird or a water bird?': a Moorhen walking across a field was, using this key, identified as either a Magpie or an Oystercatcher. The poor illustrations are rehashed from other Kingfisher books.

CBACC (10-15 years) **Tyto: the odyssey of an owl** By Glyn Frewer. Dent, 1978. 144 pages. £3.50.

Ian thought that this story was 'Not really like an owl's life.' The complete lack of illustrations seemed surprising in a children's book, and the style is very anthropomorphic.

BABBC (10-adult) **Birds** By Neil Ardley. Illustrated by Martin Gamm. Kingfisher Books, Ward Lock, 1978. 128 pages. £2.50.

This attempt at a field guide is no rival to 'Peterson': Lorna noted that it is 'Not very good for identification' and Katherine spoke for us all when she said 'All pictures have slightly wrong colours.' These poor illustrations are used again and again in Kingfisher books.

BCBCC (10-adult) **Wonders of the Hawk World** By Sigmund A. Lavine. World's Work Ltd, 1973. 64 pages. £2.10.

The print size is large, but there are some difficult words; the illustrations do not do justice to the subject and are not designed to interest the young. Katherine summed it up: 'Nice cover, but disappointing inside: there should be more pictures, which should be in colour.'

BBBAC (11-adult) **Illustrated Guide to Birds and Birdwatching** By Neil Ardley. Kingfisher Books, Ward Lock, 1980. 197 pages. £6.95.

Katherine thought this 'A very good mixture of birdwatching generally and identification', but there was 'Too much writing' for Ian, and Lorna regarded it as 'Too thick for me.' Thus, more suitable for the upper age-range. Reference sections mainly satisfactory, apart from some careless editing; while the photographs are good, the identification section is inadequate, with poor illustrations (the same ones as in other Kingfisher Books).

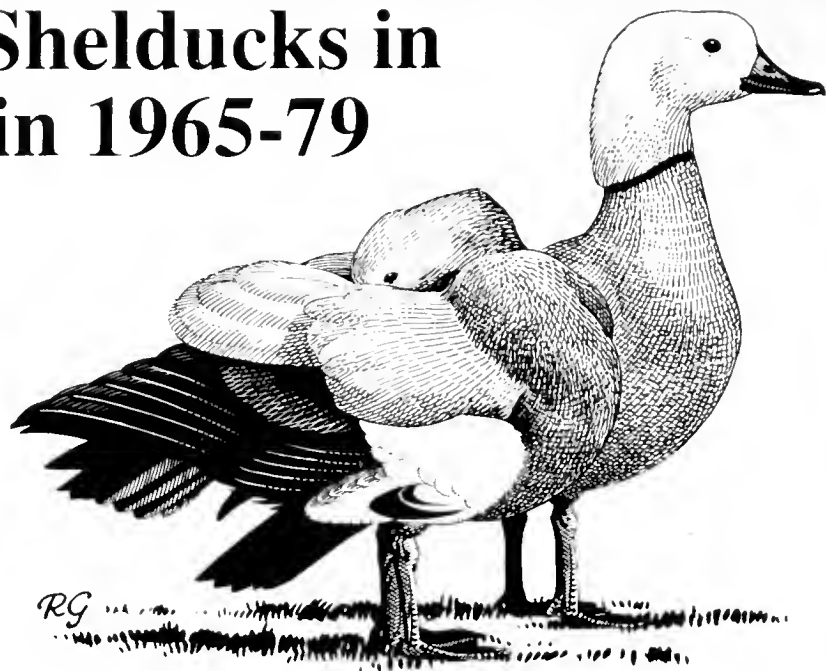
Acknowledgments

I should especially like to thank Ian Munro and Katherine Yates and my son and daughter, Kieran and Lorna, for the very professional manner in which they tackled the long task of reviewing these 40 books. The idea for this feature was hatched with Sue Jacquemier, who also provided me with further contacts.

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ

Ruddy Shelducks in Britain in 1965-79

Michael J. Rogers



This paper examines the incidence of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain during the 15 years 1965-79 and discusses whether there is any evidence that individuals of wild origin have occurred during the past 50 years. The study was undertaken at the behest of the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union in order that a decision might be made whether to transfer the species from category A (species which have been recorded in an apparently wild state in Britain or Ireland at least once within the last 50 years) to category B (species which have not been so recorded within the last 50 years). In view of the small number of Ruddy Shelducks recorded each year, the possibility of confusion with similar species, and the practicalities of obtaining information, details of occurrences since 1958 were collected and analysed by the Rarities Committee of *British Birds*, and appeals for records were made in its annual reports. None was received or traced until two in 1961 (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976); the analysis was therefore confined to the period 1965-79. No special search of publications was made to trace further records, as the study demanded no more than a comprehensive sample. The analysis aims to establish whether or not the pattern of occurrences in Great Britain is compatible with what is known of the status, distribution and movements of the species elsewhere; and to deduce therefrom whether or not any wild individuals may have occurred in Britain.

Distribution of the species

According to Cramp & Simmons (1977), who embodied much material from Vielliard (1970), the Ruddy Shelduck is a southern Palearctic species with a range extending from Amurland and China in the east to the western shores of the Black Sea, Turkey and Greece in the west, with a small and now isolated population in North Africa. Its movements are mainly dispersive or nomadic, but some populations are migratory. Little is known of its movements in the eastern part of its range; perhaps the longest regular

migration is that from Kirgiz SSR in Siberia southwards into northern India and Pakistan. Some in the Balkans and Soviet Black Sea countries disperse southwards and some winter in Greece. In North Africa, the breeding population has declined considerably in recent years and is now apparently confined to Morocco and western Algeria; from this population, up to 200 formerly migrated northwards to the Spanish marismas (Guadalquivir delta) between mid August and early October, remaining until February-March, but no more than ten were seen in the winters 1968-72. The species is described as occasional elsewhere in Mediterranean Spain and southern France during post-breeding dispersal, and as accidental in all other European countries west to Ireland and north to Finland and Iceland; two or three were reported in western Greenland in 1892 (Salomonsen 1967).

Earlier British records

The first British record was of one killed near Blandford, Dorset, during the winter of 1776 (Saunders 1889). Subsequently, singles were obtained in Ireland on 7th July 1847, 17th August 1869 and in March 1871. On 8th September 1884, a party of four was seen in Kent; and in 1886 a small influx took place involving parties of up to six in several parts of the country. In 1892 (the year of the Greenland record, see above), a still larger influx occurred, with parties of up to 20 in many areas (Ogilvie 1892).

The problem of 'escapes' was also recognised by Saunders and it is significant that, even in 1889, he commented that 'the species was long ago introduced on many of our ornamental waters and birds shot in Norfolk, Northamptonshire and other places are either known, or strongly suspected, to have escaped from semi-captivity.' Several county authors in areas where the species has occurred most regularly have since reflected his views, albeit with some tentative modifications in instances concerning more than a lone individual. In Sussex, des Forges & Harber (1963) considered all singles to be of suspect origin, but added that, of about 20 then recorded, singletons had occurred on only two occasions and that this was significant, since parties were much less likely to consist of escapes. In Kent, Harrison (1953) commented that 'all records were open to some measure of doubt but that there was little doubt that the species had occurred as a genuine vagrant; the obtaining of one or more on one day or within a day or two of each other strongly suggested such instances were unlikely as escapes.' The Kent records largely conformed to today's pattern; so, too, did those given for Suffolk by Ticehurst (1932), but Payn (1978) remained cautious about records of singletons in that county and considered that all recent reports related to escapes. In Norfolk, Seago (1977) did not comment on the 23 coastal examples up to 1929, but thought two more-recent occurrences may have been of escapes.

Although the present study deals only with British records, it aims to throw light on the status of the Ruddy Shelduck in Britain and Ireland. Suffice to say, therefore, that Ruttledge (1966) stated that in Ireland 'single birds must always be suspect', but left as perhaps less questionable three past records of three together.



170. Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, India, February 1976 (T. Shiota)

Method

The figures used here have been adjusted to remove the more likely cases of duplication at proximate localities. Reports of all free-winged individuals have been included, apart from three (see under ‘Results’). Most records were fully supported by descriptions, but some earlier ones, dismissed by observers as escapes, were not. All available data were examined in order to avoid the chance of confusion with escapes of the closely allied Cape Shelduck *T. cana* (plate 172); in the event, this was not relevant. Several reportedly tame individuals have been included, as tameness does not necessarily indicate captive origin (see Cramp & Simmons 1977).

During the period under review, there were about 75 reports involving about 123 individuals. A steady increase in the annual number of records, from one in 1965 to 12 in 1978 and nine in 1979 (fig. 1), is considered to reflect increased observer activity and the response to published appeals for records, rather than a natural trend. Only the first date of each sighting is used. In the case of an apparently discrete party wintering in Dyfed in three

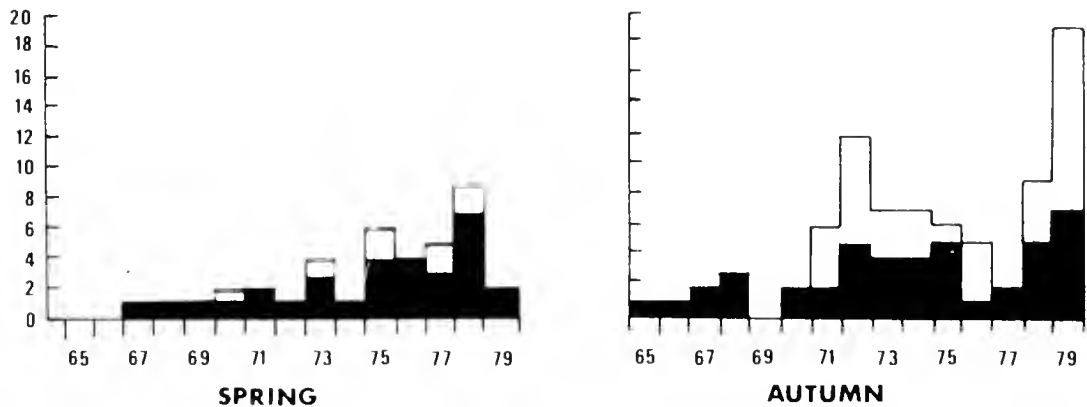


Fig. 1. Annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain in spring and autumn, 1965-79 (number of records, filled columns; extra individuals, open)

successive years, only the dates of arrival in the first year have been included. The movements of a free-winged family party at York University have been entirely excluded (see 'Results').

Results

Of the total of about 123 individuals, roughly two-thirds appeared during the second half of the year, but removal of the multiple-occurrence factor revealed a far more even annual distribution (fig. 2). The breakdown of dates of first observation into seven-day periods showed some increase in spring records during late March to early May, including several instances of more than one bird together. Most first occurrences, however, took place from early June, and in particular from mid July, with a continuing or further peak during late September to mid November. In autumn, there was a far higher incidence of groups, with ten reports of three or more individuals together, including five of five and one of eight, all within the period 16th July-16th October. Only two groups were reported to contain juveniles.

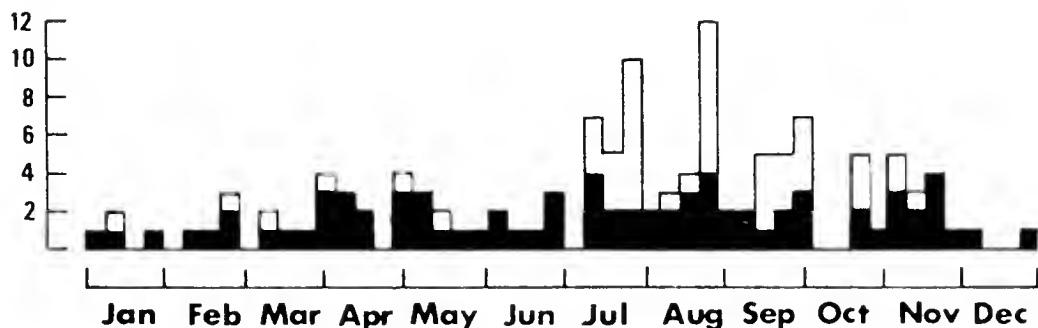


Fig. 2. Monthly occurrences of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain in seven-day periods, 1965-79 (number of records, filled columns; extra individuals, open)

There was a strong bias of records towards the southeast, 72% of all occurrences and 71% of all birds being seen southeast of a line from King's Lynn, Norfolk, to Swansea, West Glamorgan (fig. 3). Of the ten parties of three or more, only three were in the north or west: five at Spurn, Humberside, on 23rd July 1972; three at Aberaeron, Dyfed, in the winters of 1974/75 and 1975/76; and eight at Llyn Alaw, Anglesey, Gwynedd, on 26th July 1979.

All 11 records between late March and the end of April were in southern counties from Kent to Devon and from Gloucestershire to South Glamorgan, but in May and early June there was a wider scatter throughout the country. In autumn, 75% of all occurrences were in the southeastern half of England and Wales: involving 71% of all individuals (83%, but for the Humberside and Gwynedd flocks). There was, therefore, some evidence of a pattern of occurrence.

Each of three reports excluded from the analysis data has a strong bearing on any attempt at a general interpretation. The first, a series of spring and late summer reports from the Whitton and Blacktoft Sands areas in Humberside between 1974 and 1979, appeared to conform to the countrywide temporal pattern, but it was subsequently learned that the species had been breeding in that area since 1975. Secondly, Dr C. Barry

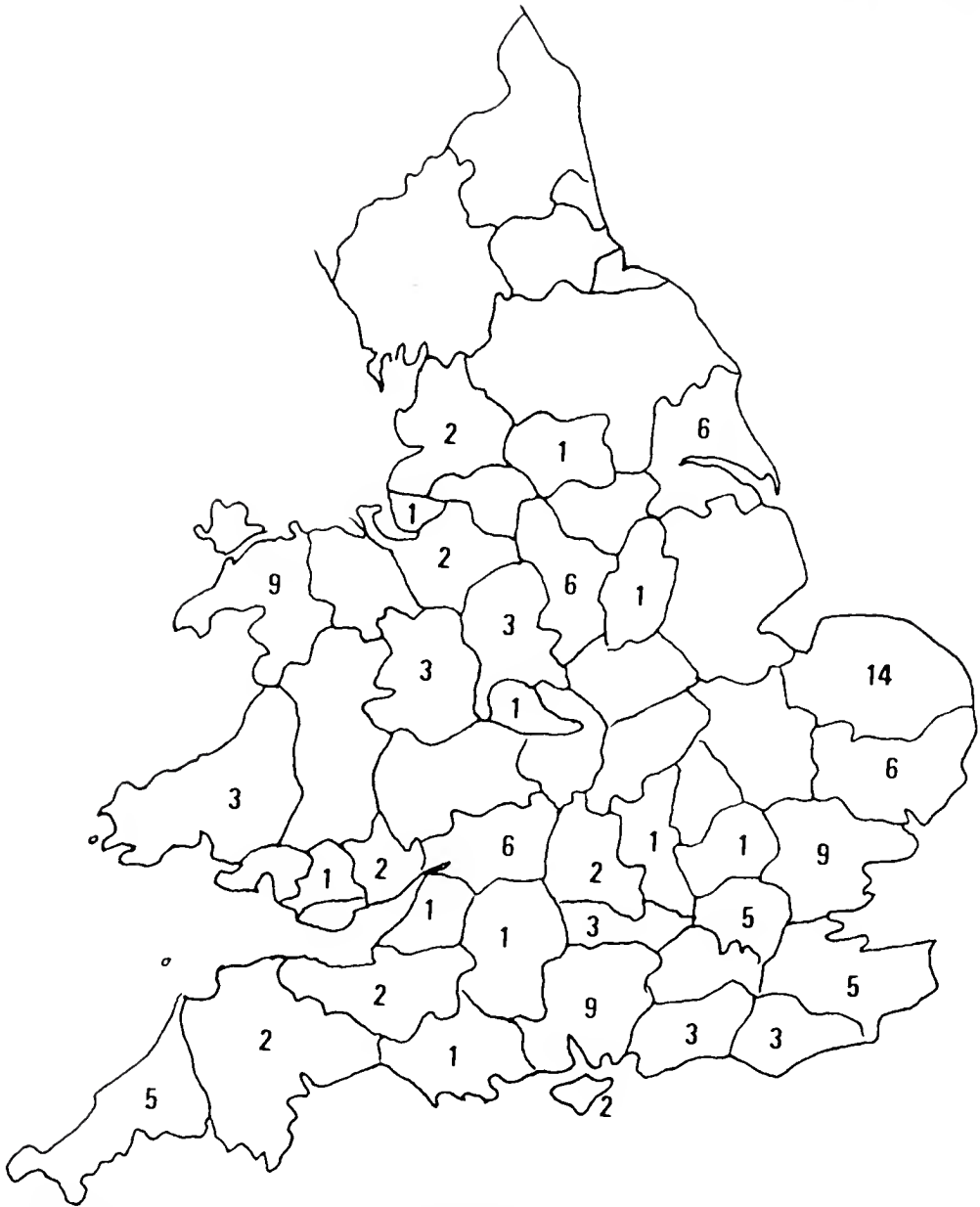


Fig. 3. Approximate totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in each county of Britain, 1965-79

Thomas reported that a pair presented to the University of York in 1973 reared four male and one female young in 1974, but that these eluded pinioning; in the summers of 1975, 1977 and 1978, two males returned to the campus to moult; in 1978, they were present from mid July to mid September and were joined for a short while by a third. The possible relationship between these two groups of incidents is self-evident (they also illustrate how easily breeding in the wild or semi-captivity may go unseen or undocumented). It also suggests that individuals that are not of wild origin disperse or migrate at much the same time as wild populations, and this is further exemplified by the movements of the third group, which was only partially excluded from the analysis (its first arrival was included as its provenance was clearly unknown). These were the three males which arrived at Aberaeron in November 1974, one leaving in early March 1975 and the others towards the end of that month; what were probably the same two were seen further north at Aberystwyth and on the Dyfi estuary in early April; all three had returned to Aberaeron by the end of October, two

remaining until 22nd April 1976, only to reappear by 19th August. It is possible that these were the York individuals performing a short, but nonetheless properly timed, winter migration.

These three sets of incidents embraced 20 reports which might otherwise have been regarded as viable occurrences of wild individuals. As the analysis involves only 75 occurrences, the question has to be asked whether a substantial proportion of these might also have proved to be of a similar nature had further information come to hand.

Status elsewhere in Europe

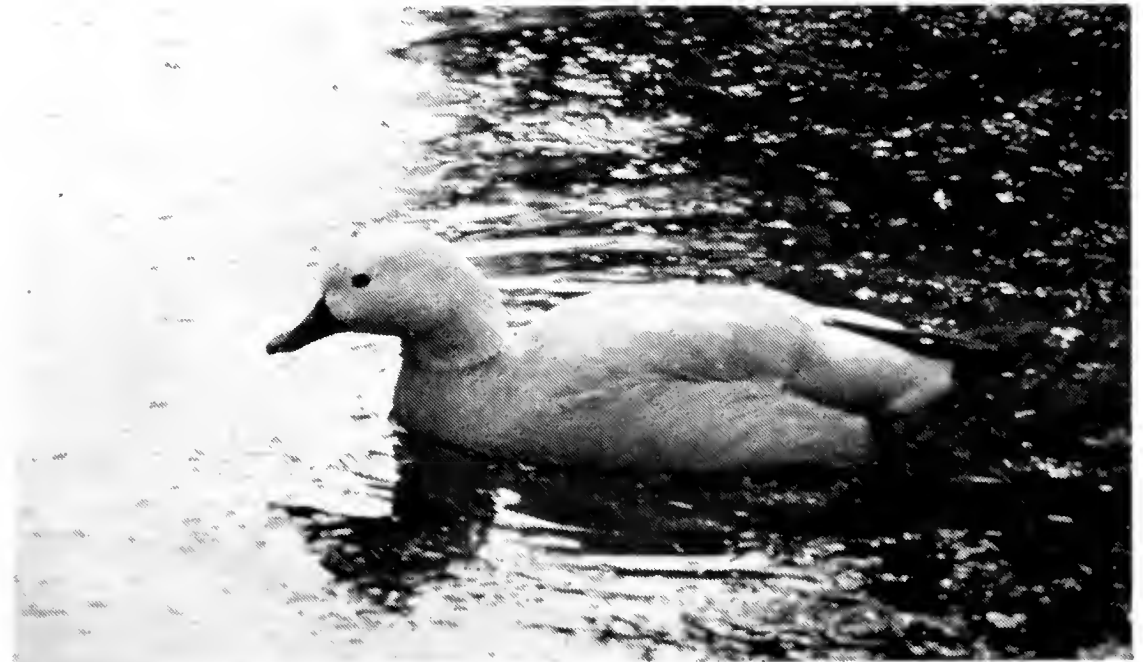
If at least some British records are assumed to relate to genuine vagrants, it is necessary to look at the Continent for supportive evidence. Enquiries were made in France to ascertain whether vagrants might be making their way up from the southern Spanish-Moroccan population. The more likely alternative, that the autumn incursion into Britain involves individuals or family parties dispersing westwards from, perhaps, the Black Sea, prompted similar enquiries in the Low Countries, Germany and Poland. All correspondents emphasised the problem of escapes, as can be seen in the summaries below.

POLAND Only eight records 1908-63, and seven (16 individuals) 1971-81, including party of six females or young, Silesia, 9th-20th October 1976, and five, middle section of River Vistula, 9th July 1981; at least some considered escapes; most records Silesia, due to improved observer coverage; family of young recently escaped Wrocław Zoo (Dr L. Tomiało *in litt.*).

SWITZERLAND Sightings totalling about 290 individuals during 1960-80: 11 in September, 43 in October, 26-33 per month November to March, but total includes series of sightings of escaped pair with six young, 1963-64; most, if not all, records relate to escapes; winter increase probably due to regular national wildfowl counts; no increase in annual totals during period (Dr R. Winkler *in litt.*).

GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC (summary provided by A. Hill *in litt.*) Almost yearly visitor Lake Constance since early 1960s, escapes from zoos, parks and collections probably involved, even large groups (Baner & Glutz 1968); ten records, mainly from Lake Constance, 1962-72, one January, one February, three March, one April, one August and two undated, all considered

171. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Lancashire, July 1975 (G. Carr)



escapes (Hölzinger *et al.* 1972) (note Lake Constance records also included in Swiss data); only three records Westphalia, February, April and November, the last being known escapes (Peitzmeier 1969); two records Elbe and Weser, one May, one October (Panzer & Raulhe 1978); four records Sudheide and Aller Niederung, two April, one September, one November (Garve 1977). R. K. Berndt (per U. Radomski *in litt.*), in unpublished comprehensive review of Schleswig-Holstein 1950-80 (after only three prior records), gave total of 79 occurrences (122 individuals) with large increase 1971-80 (52 occurrences, 81 individuals); free-flying pair bred Kiel several years; summer records from whole province suggested feral breeding population becoming established; most records April (14), May (ten) and September (11), with five in each of June, July and August, one or two in remaining months; parties of three and four recorded once each, five twice and nine once (at Stenzenteich, 2nd September 1976).

Dates of records from other sources in recent years (A. Hill, Rheinland-Pfalz; G. Kopke, Westphalia additional to Peitzmeier; A. Bruch, Berlin; and U. Reimers, Braunschweig) total four each March, September; two each July, November; and singles January, April, May, August and October; parties of three recorded twice (July and September) and four and five once each (both September).

NETHERLANDS Species included in category D1 (records considered to consist of more than 50% escapes or introduced); normally scarce, but some years numbers evidently higher; recorded in only 12 5-km squares 1973-77, but possibly breeding in ten and proved in two; first certain breeding 1969, Noordwijk, Zuid-Holland; no information available on flocks or monthly distribution (G. J. Oreeel *in litt.*).

BELGIUM (Flanders) Species included in category D (BOU); since 1968 regarded as resident, non-breeding; about 47 occurrences (68 individuals) 1965-79, all but 13 mid August to late November, including 14 (25 individuals) October, five (eight individuals) August; only one June and none July; parties of five once and four once (both October) (P. Herroelen *in litt.*).

FRANCE Records away from Mediterranean generally regarded as of escapes; 15 occurrences in north and west (Cap Gris Nez to Brittany) 1970-79, nine mid July to end November, but data incomplete; probable escapes Paris area most years; party of five, Cap Gris Nez, 22nd October 1979; four, west Brittany, September 1971 or 1972, probably escaped local zoo (P. Yésou *in litt.*).

Certain tentative conclusions may be drawn from these data. One of the most important is that there is no evidence from Poland, where observer activity is admittedly relatively limited, of either spring ‘overshooting’ or late summer dispersal from the Black Sea or Balkan populations. Equally, the Swiss figures provide no suggestion of migratory incursions from the Balkans or east Mediterranean (mountain barriers are no deterrent, cf. known migrations between Russia and north Indian subcontinent and Moroccan breeding in the High Atlas). The West German data (drawn from a far longer period) suggest a pattern of occurrence as distinct as that in Britain. Monthly totals for the German Federal Republic (excluding Lake Constance) and Britain are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
German Federal Republic	1	2	4	18	12	5	7	6	16	2	4	1
Britain	3	4	1	10	7	7	6	11	9	4	11	2

Spring and autumn peaks show well, but whether this reflects (a) the pre- and post-breeding movements of escapes living in the wild or (b) the passage of vagrants through a generally static semi-feral population is open to question. Part of the answer must lie with the evidence of the known seasonal movements of the York and Aberaeron flocks in Britain. It should also be borne in mind that observer activity is greatest during migration

time and that birds on the move, especially family parties of this conspicuous species, will be more obvious than during the summer months (which include the four-week moult). Nonetheless, it is odd that so few are seen in winter in either Germany or Britain. Comparison of the autumn figures does suggest the possibility of departures from Germany followed by arrivals in Britain, which might explain the geographical distribution of autumn records in Britain.

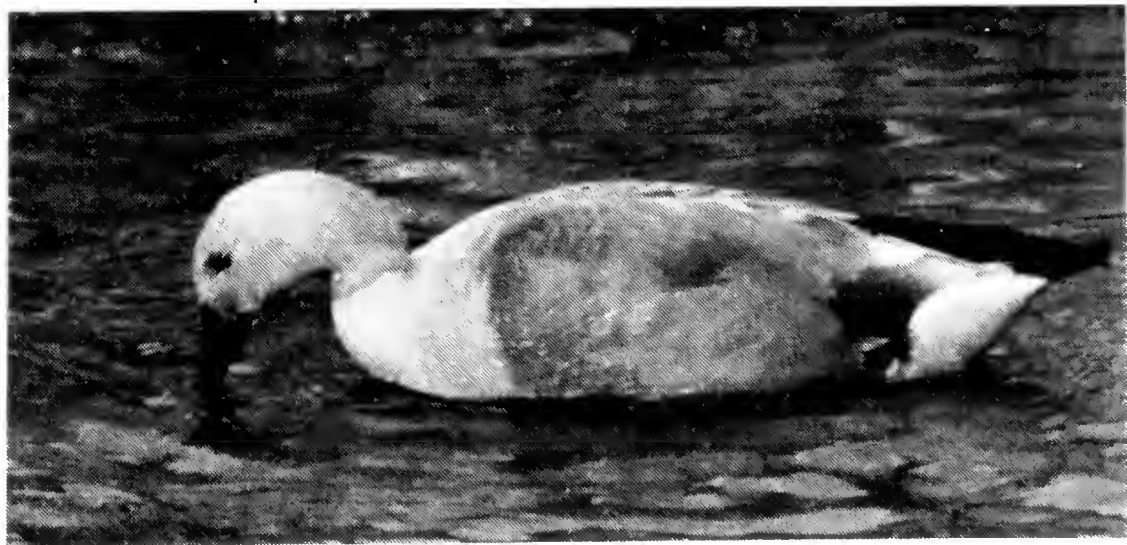
The expressed caution over the problem of escapes, and the suspicion of the establishment of a feral breeding population, in West Germany is no less emphasised by the available data from the Netherlands, where known incidents of breeding cast doubts on the origins of any family party seen in autumn. Although G. J. Oreel (*in litt.*) does not agree that autumn arrivals in Britain might relate to pre- or post-breeding flights of Dutch Ruddy Shelducks, the general facts cannot be ignored. The sighting of a party of five flying west at Cap Gris Nez, northwest France, on 22nd October 1979 was preceded by a similar party at Eke, Belgium, on 20th-21st and followed by a flock of four moving southwest over Grimbergen, Belgium, on 27th: they may have been vagrants or, equally, of Dutch or German origin. Flocks of five and four at Mechelen, Antwerp, in Belgium, in January 1980 were considered to involve escapes (whether merely on the grounds of tameness is not known).

Finally, the available data from France, admittedly inconclusive, give no indication of northward dispersal from the Mediterranean region.

Comparison with sympatric species

Certain parallels between the occurrences in Britain of Ruddy Shelducks and those of loosely sympatric species, with regard to both spring migration overshooting and autumn dispersal vagrancy, do exist, particularly with the equally strong-flying, dispersive and nomadic Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*. The latter, however, wanders into northwest Europe to a much lesser extent in spring and, in recent years at least, the geographical distribution of its records in Britain is quite different (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976). A detailed analysis of this nature, however, although supportive of

172. Male Cape Shelduck *Tadorna cana*, Devon, February 1977 (D. W. Greenslade)





173. Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, India, February 1976 (T. Shiota)

Ruddy Shelduck vagrancy, would still not show which are escapes and which are not.

Conclusions

The general picture of the current status of the Ruddy Shelduck in Britain and northwest Europe in recent years suggests that the species is increasing, despite the fact that natural populations in eastern Europe and North Africa have contracted considerably since the beginning of this century. On the evidence available, there is every reason to assume that the increase in sightings, particularly in Britain, is due to greater observer-activity (coupled with a more thorough documentation arising out of this enquiry) and a greater number of individual shelducks wandering from the proliferation of wildfowl collections throughout Europe. It is highly unlikely that any irruption will occur on the scale of that in 1892 (the reason for which remains obscure). There would appear to be no grounds for presuming that any record in Britain during at least the past 50 years has definitely related to a wild vagrant.

The BOU Records Committee has seen a typescript of this paper, but has decided to retain Ruddy Shelducks in Category A of the British and Irish list, and will be making the following statement in its next report: 'This species has long been common in waterfowl collections, and since 1969 has bred ferally in the Netherlands and northwest Germany; hence there are doubts about the origins of most seen at liberty in these islands this century (Michael J. Rogers, *Brit. Birds* 75: 446-455). Three records (of 5-7 birds) in southern Ireland in winter 1945/46 occurred during an influx of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* (Rutledge 1966, *Ireland's Birds*, London), justifying retention in category A for the present; but no later records for Britain or Ireland can be upheld.'

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all county and regional recorders and individual observers who sent in records,

and also to P. Herroelen (Belgium), Pierre Yésou (France), Uwe Wagner and, in particular, Alistair Hill (West Germany), Viggo Ree (Norway), Gerald J. Orrel (Netherlands), Dr L. Tomiaśojć (Poland) and Dr Rallael Winkler (Switzerland), who so kindly underwent the tedious task of compiling summaries for their respective countries; also to Robert Hudson, Malcolm Ogilvie and D. I. M. Wallace for their comments and guidance on the preparation of this paper; and to Robert Hudson for supplying the text of the BOURG's forthcoming statement in advance of publication in *The Ibis*.

Summary

Between 1965 and 1979, some 123 possibly wild Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* occurred in Great Britain. The past and present status of the species in Britain and Europe is examined with particular reference to the incidence of known or strongly suspected 'escapes' from zoos, parks and collections and subsequent breeding in the wild. Although there is evidence of seasonal movements implied by peak numbers in spring and autumn, both in Britain and on the Continent, there is no firm evidence that vagrants from natural populations are involved. The occurrence pattern in Britain shows a strong bias towards the east and southeast in late summer and autumn, but this does not compare with that of sympatric species. As there are proven instances of small parties leaving zoos and collections and others successfully breeding in the wild, such parties elsewhere cannot be regarded as wild vagrants. Although the number of records in Britain and on the Continent has recently increased, this probably simply reflects more efficient recording of a growing number of escapes. The evidence suggests that no record in Britain of Ruddy Shelduck during the past 50 years can with certainty be regarded as other than an escape from captivity.

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Birds in action

This is the fourth in our series of occasional photographic features 'Birds in action' (see also *Brit. Birds* 68: 420; 69: 399-402; 71: 68-75). The object of the feature is to present photographs that are not simply portraits, however good, whether at or away from the nest, but which are good-quality shots of birds doing things—feeding, flying, bathing, singing. Action of this type is a valuable ingredient of any bird-photograph; many bird-photographers would aver that their ideal photograph is one that is well composed and aesthetically pleasing, correctly exposed with at least the essential interest of the photograph in critical focus, and above all showing the bird (or birds) *doing something interesting*. If the photograph is of a bird indulging in an unusual or unrecorded form of behaviour, so much the better.

Inevitably, such photographs need more than the usual luck or skill; both these elements are needed for a 'wait-and-see' shot from a temporary hide of, for example, a Goldfinch on a seeding thistle-head. But the thrill of obtaining a good-quality photograph of a bird in action away from the nest is, for the bird-photographer, well worth the prior fieldwork and the long, uncomfortable, and sometimes fruitless waits in a hide.

We do not know how all the photographs we feature on this occasion were taken, but some were certainly the result of just such a process. All, however, epitomise that which is best in photographs of birds 'doing something interesting'.

Mike Wilkes's shot of a Swallow yawning (plate 174) is a good example of a 'contrived' wait-and-see photograph. Having located a nesting pair, he provided the wire perch, set up a hide, and the bird shown in the photograph used the perch almost immediately, probably having a rest after visiting its nest.

His second photograph is the only one in this series of birds at the nest: an attractive composition featuring the noisy activity of a pair of Rooks at their nest in the top of a hawthorn bush (plate 178). This scene shows the arrival of the male, his pouch filled, from whom the female took food to give to the young.

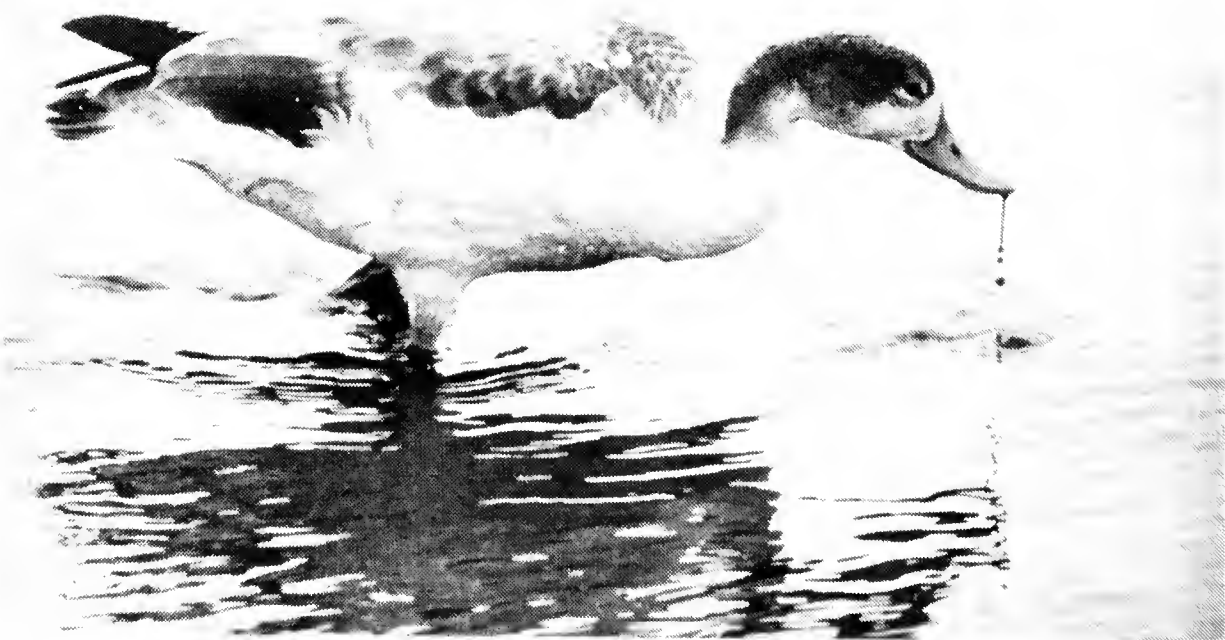
Frits Houtkamp's delightful photograph of a Greenfinch feeding (plate 175) has all the hallmarks of another well planned wait-and-see shot, and must have given him a great deal of satisfaction.

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- 174 & 175. Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Worcestershire, August 1977 (M. C. Wilkes); Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Netherlands, December 1978 (Frits Houtkamp)
176 & 177. Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Cornwall, June 1972 (J. B. & S. Bottomley); Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Cornwall, November 1969 (J. B. & S. Bottomley)
178 & 179. Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*, Worcestershire, May 1977 (M. C. Wilkes); Coot *Fulica atra*, Warwickshire, June 1972 (S. C. Porter)
180 & 181. Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, Banffshire, December 1976 (J. Edelsten); juvenile Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Suffolk, August 1976 (R. J. Chandler)
182 & 183. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, Cornwall, July 1976 (J. B. & S. Bottomley); Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*, Co. Cork, May 1978 (Richard T. Mills)











Inevitably, it seems, we select a photograph by Brian and Sheila Bottomley for this feature; on this occasion, the quality of their work has forced us to include no fewer than three. The first is a marvellous photograph of a Grasshopper Warbler 'reeling' (plate 176), obtained at close range by stalking: one can almost hear that monotonous churr, so evocative of long summer days—and nights! Their second shot is of a Lapwing displaying (plate 177), not in defence of its nest site, but to protect its winter feeding territory on a Cornish estuary.

The third of the Bottomleys' photographs (plate 182) is a charming domestic scene, appropriate to the nest, but of added interest because the juvenile House Sparrow is being fed by its parent away from the nest. This is a superb example of the type of photograph that makes wait-and-see work so worthwhile.

The displaying Coot (plate 179), photographed by the late S. C. Porter, is another shot full of action. The ripples add considerably to the picture, indicating movement while at the same time both framing the bird and adding interest to the reflection of the bird in the water.

Redwings feeding on berries in the autumn and early winter are not an uncommon sight, but photographs as attractive as that by J. Edelsten (plate 180) are most unusual. The composition is delightful, and the moment of shutter release has caught well the brief movement between the plucking of the cotoneaster berry and its being swallowed.

The juvenile but full-grown Shelduck (plate 181), photographed by Dr Richard Chandler, similarly catches the bird in one of those brief moments when it raises its head after an extended period of filtering ooze, dribbling as it does so. Again, the movement of the bird is shown by the ripples and broken reflection.

The final photograph, too, is all action: Richard Mills's fine picture of a Canada Goose, honking loudly, skiing on the water surface, and spraying water everywhere as it threatens an intruder (plate 183).

May we encourage bird-photographers who have good quality black-and-white photographs of birds in action to submit them to us? We hope to repeat this feature occasionally, and will welcome prints from which to make a further selection.

R. J. CHANDLER, DON SMITH and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Seventy-five years ago...

'Mr — sends us an account of the interbreeding of the Ring-Ousel and the Blackbird, which took place during the spring of this year in a garden in the Isle of Wight. The Ring-Ousel, a hen, passed the winter in this garden and in the spring paired with a Blackbird . . . Mr — did not himself see the young birds . . . "The family in whose garden the Ring-Ousel is," he writes, "are diligent observers of birds and intimately acquainted with Ring-Ousels." Rare as such a union as this appears to be, it is indeed a matter for surprise that this same family should be able to record a similar case which occurred in their garden when living in south Devon four or five years ago, and here again the Ring-Ousel was a female. It is on this account that we somehow suspect that, after all, some mistake may have been made—the coincidence is very strange. Eds' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 153, October 1907)

Obituary

Eric Arnold Roberts Ennion, MD, MA (1900-1981)

The immediate sense of sadness and loss on hearing of Eric Ennion's death was tempered by happy memories of a man of great humanity, intelligence, energy and fun. Those of us privileged to have known and worked and learnt with Eric had gained immeasurably from his warm friendship and the enthusiasm he conveyed in all he did and said and wrote. Eric's most enduring memorial will be his paintings and illustrations of birds, as full of life and vitality as their maker. He always had time and a kindly word for aspiring artists, particularly the young, and would invariably find something to praise while pointing out the areas for improvement. It usually boiled down to sloppy seeing, and a quick sketch on the back of an envelope would make the point, sending the young artist back to the field, freshly inspired and eager to look and try again.

Eric Ennion was born on 7th June 1900, in Kettering, Norfolk. He



184. Dr Eric Ennion (1900-1981) (*Hugh Ennion*)

followed his father into medicine, attending Caius College, Cambridge, and then St Mary's Hospital, returning to East Anglia to join his father's practice at Burwell in 1926. Two years later, on his father's death, he took over the practice, which he ran for the next 17 years. In that period, with a growing family, he found time to visit the Netherlands and its bird-rich areas of Texel and Naardemeer, and Iceland. He held one-man exhibitions of paintings in London, started broadcasting, wrote many articles and three books, including *Adventurers Fen* (1942). This is a warm, delightful and beautifully illustrated history of man and wildlife in a small Cambridge-shire fen which he had known all his life.

By 1945, the responsibilities of the practice were increasing steadily and the administration becoming irksome. The sidelines of writing, broadcasting and painting held out the possibility of earning a reasonable living if followed full-time, and Ennion felt the time was right to change course. He sold the practice, bought a cottage, but was never to live in it. An encounter with Francis Butler, the father of Field Study Centres, was a meeting of like minds. Flatford Mill had recently been taken over by the National Trust and was the ideal site for the first Field Centre, and the Trust agreed. So, in the summer of 1945, with his wife Dorothy running the domestic side, Ennion started to create a Field Centre with faith but no funds. Biology and painting courses, with a strong emphasis on field work, were established. After two years, he was joined by an entomologist, John Sankey, and later by a botanist, Jim Bingley. It was a remarkably hard-working period, and the three biologists swapped courses in order to gain more knowledge in areas in which they were not expert. He published two more books, *The Story of Migration* (1947) and *The Lapwing* (1949), and served on the councils of the BTO and the RSPB.

After five years, Flatford was well established and solvent, and Ennion felt he would like to spend more time on birds than he could while running such a wide range of courses, and dealing with an ever-increasing burden of administration. It was time to change course again, and more good fortune took him to another perfect setting: Monk's House on the Northumberland coast, opposite The Farne Islands. There he set up a bird observatory, the eighth in the chain of coastal stations which had come into operation after the war. The story of Monk's House is vividly told in his book *The House on the Shore* (1960). He was in his element, his own boss at last. At Monk's House he pioneered a wide range of ingeniously constructed and placed traps and nets to catch birds, particularly waders, for ringing. Four chapters of *The House on the Shore* are devoted to catching and ringing, indicating the importance he placed on this aspect of bird observatory work. He joined the Bird Observatories Committee of the BTO and served on the Council of the BOU. He published *Bird Study in a Garden* in 1958 and held further exhibitions in London.

In 1960, he joined me in organising the first exhibition of British Bird Painters, which was to lead to the formation, in 1964, of the Society of Wildlife Artists of which he became Chairman and latterly Vice-President. Any committee he joined could be sure of his whole-hearted and active support, and I was at the receiving end of many letters and memos

crammed with ideas and plans for our exhibitions and the fledgling Society to which he was completely dedicated.

In 1961, Eric and Dorothy moved for the last time, to a mill in Shalbourne, Wiltshire, with watercress-beds stretching up the little valley behind the house. There he could devote far more time to painting, the view from the studio window providing a constant source of ideas for pictures. In 1963, *Bird Watching* was published, and in 1966 we arranged the exhibition of British Bird Paintings in Oxford for the 14th International Ornithological Congress. He was collaborating with his great friend Niko Tinbergen, Secretary-General of the Congress, on a book which drew on their joint expertise as field naturalists and a photographer and artist. *Tracks*, published in 1967, was a great success and, together with Hugh Falkus, they did a second book on the sign-language of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, *Signals for Survival* (1970).

In the following decade, he continued to paint and to run courses on wildlife and landscape painting. He was a natural teacher who inspired both an enthusiasm for the subject and devotion to himself. He taught his pupils to see with a fresh vision: not just his, but how to develop their own. He encouraged a greater understanding of the pictorial possibilities in nature and how to grasp the essential elements for picture-making.

Eric's eyes were acutely observant, catching the individual character of birds, their odd movements and ways of standing. These observations were interpreted in a wholly personal way with a fluent use of watercolour or economically controlled pen line. His field sketches, and rough memory drawings when working out compositions for paintings, were drawn rapidly and with a certainty borne of long practice and deep knowledge of the subject.

He has had a profound influence through his teaching, writing, broadcasting and lecturing, and through his art. He was an all-round naturalist, placing prime importance on field work. He was a kind, gentle, friendly man, greatly missed, but whose name will not be forgotten as long as there are people who share his delight in the living world around them.

ROBERT GILLMOR

Mystery photographs

70 To solve all arguments straight away, last month's mystery picture (repeated here as plate 185) shows a party of Dunlins *Calidris alpina*.

Some readers may have plumped for Sanderlings *C. alba*, in view of the apparent bold wingbar which is a classic feature of that species. It of course usually has a predominantly white head and breast, but does show a similar pattern in summer plumage to that in the picture. However, is the wingbar really bold enough? Consider the accompanying photograph of Sanderlings (plate 186).

On all *Calidris* waders, the white bar across the outer wing is formed by



185. Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Cornwall, November 1978 (G. P. Gill)



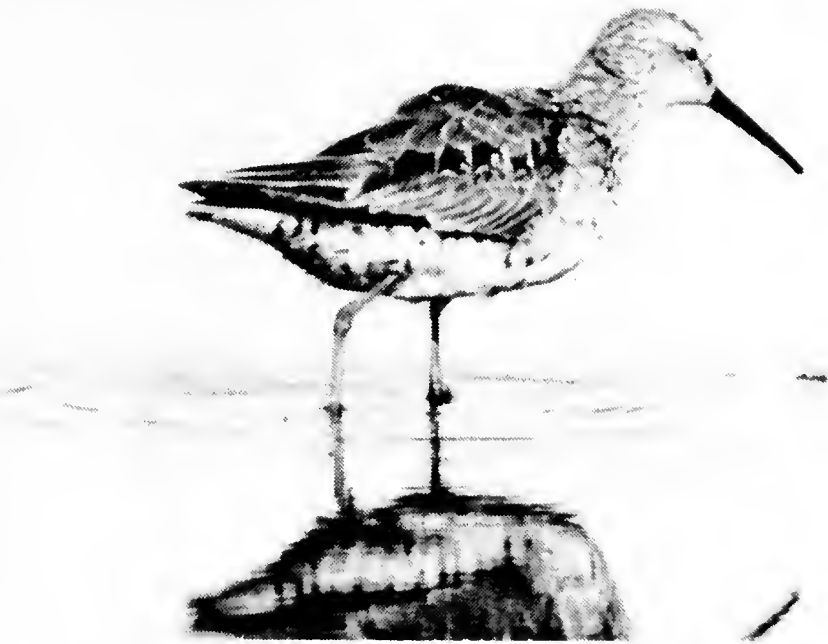
186. Sanderlings *Calidris alba*, Scilly, October 1981 (Gordon Langsbury)

white tips to the inner primary coverts, white fringes on the outer webs of the inner seven or so primaries, and white primary shafts. Sanderling is unique among the west Palearctic species, however, in that on the inner primaries (usually the inner five) the white fringe to the outer web joins the white feather-shaft, forming a very conspicuous white blaze (Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* and Rock Sandpiper *C. ptilocnemis* may also show this feature to a lesser degree). The effect is enhanced by a pale base-colour to the inner webs of the primaries which contrasts quite sharply with the dark trailing edge.

On the inner wing, the tips of the greater coverts form a broader bar on Sanderling than on any of the other species. To choose as a reference point the outer secondary, the white on the covert is more than half as broad as the dark secondary tip, while on all other species the dark trailing edge at this point is typically at least three times wider than the white bar.

The mystery birds all have a relatively narrow greater-covert bar, and do not show an accentuated trailing edge to the primaries. We must therefore eliminate Sanderling, but need look only to the bill for a positive identification feature. The longish, slightly droop-tipped bills are quite typical of Dunlin, and the dark rump, the bulky shape and the dark leading lesser coverts (not contrastingly blackish as on both Sanderling and Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*) confirm our identification.

JOHN MARCHANT



187. Mystery photograph 71. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes



Woodcocks roding at night On 8th April 1978, camped in a wood in the Forge Valley, near Scarborough, North Yorkshire, Andrew Harrop and I observed Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* roding typically at dusk, from 19.00 to 19.30 GMT. We then left, and returned at about 22.30, when no activity was noticed. At about 23.00, and for about one hour, at least one Woodcock was roding, several times uttering the regular pattern of repeated 'twiss-ick' notes interspersed with three croaks. Once a persistent twittering was heard, something which, from personal observation, I have come to associate with certain forms of chasing involving two or more roding individuals. At about 05.00 hours on the following morning, a little before dawn, normal roding was also observed.

MALCOLM THOMAS

37 Park Avenue, Southport, Merseyside PR9 9EF

On 16th May 1978, at the Hunterston Power Station site in Ayrshire, I observed a Woodcock roding by artificial light. At 00.00 GMT, I heard the 'tsiwick' call and glimpsed the Woodcock as it flew just above a street light at a height of about 7 m. At 00.45 hours on 22nd May, I again heard the call, but did not see the bird. Both nights were overcast. The Hunterston complex is particularly well illuminated, and there are several woods in the immediate vicinity; roding is seen regularly at dusk, and occasionally at

dawn, around the site perimeter, and in 1970 a Woodcock's nest was found within ½ km of the boundary fence.

JOHN L. BURTON
55 Bowfield Road, West Kilbride, Ayrshire KA23 9JZ

John Wilson has commented as follows: 'Monica Shorten (1974, *The European Woodcock: a search of the literature since 1940*) stated that "roding may exceptionally be observed at almost any hour of the day", but mentioned no records of roding after the main period of activity in the evening. As far as I am aware, this type of observation has not been recorded within the species' main breeding range (except possibly in northern latitudes, where it is difficult to distinguish the change from evening to morning). I made a similar observation in woods near Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, on 23rd March 1978, when roding began at 20.02 GMT and finished at 20.31. I remained in the wood for about a further hour, during which time one or more roding Woodcocks were heard for a period of about 20 minutes: only the calls associated with a single individual were heard, i.e. "twiss-ick" and croaking. It was completely dark with clear skies, but no moon. (Frequently, when I thought the roding period was finished, I again heard a single roding individual (sometimes more than one) up to 15 minutes later, which often remained in the vicinity for a further two-ten minutes.) The twittering call which Mr Thomas heard signifies that more than one Woodcock was present: it may have been another male, as they utter this call when chasing each other, or a female. Both sexes also perform a similar type of flight in the early part of the season (usually March-April), but with only the following bird twittering. Roding at dawn is frequent, though not as intense as in the evening.' Eds

Vertical escape flight of Woodcock At 04.30 GMT on 25th June 1979, at Tentsmuir Point NNR, Fife, I accidentally disturbed a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* from the woodland floor. Instead of flying off in the characteristic zig-zag manner, it rose vertically through the lower and middle branches of two adjacent 8-10m-high Scots pines *Pinus sylvestris*, with a couple of twists as it climbed (owing to its speed and to the light conditions, I was not sure whether or not these were complete 360° turns); on reaching the top of the canopy, it levelled its flight and flew off. Of the many Woodcocks which I have accidentally flushed, I have not experienced this type of escape flight by any, nor can I find any mention of it in the recent literature.

TOM W. DOUGALL
Department of Geography, The University, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9AL

John Wilson has spent five years researching into the Woodcock and has commented as follows: 'I have observed the type of flight seen by Mr Dougall many times, both during the breeding season and in winter. The manner of escape flight is, in my opinion, dependent on how the surrounding cover is arranged spatially and the way in which the bird is flushed. In the instance described, I would suggest that the Woodcock's actual escape route was up through the canopy, the bird twisting to avoid branches as it climbed: an escape flight typical in young coniferous woodland. Woodcocks will beat their way up through the canopy if the trees are more closely spaced, or if the canopy is thicker (as with spruces *Picea*). I cannot recall having seen the vertical flight described in the scientific literature, but would suggest that it exists in the sporting literature (e.g. Ogilvie-Grant, 1912, *British Game Birds and Wildfowl*; Seigne, 1936, *Woodcock—Sportsman's Library*; Vesey-Fitzgerald, 1946, *British Game*).' Eds

Announcements

The Living Birds of Eric Ennion We are pleased to have been able to arrange with Victor Gollancz Ltd for this new book (see review on pages 479-480) to be available post free to *BB* subscribers in the UK and Ireland

The Living Birds of ERIC ENNION

The Living Birds of ERIC ENNION



GOLLANCZ

Introduction & Commentary by John Bushby

(see 'British BirdShop' on page vii). Eric Ennion was the senior judge for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' in the first two years of these competitions. His work must be known to almost every British ornithologist: his distinctive style is instantly recognisable.

A donation from Victor Gollancz Ltd has enabled us to feature Eric Ennion's 'Siskins and Redpolls on European larch' as a tribute to his memory on the cover of this issue, which also contains his obituary by Robert Gillmor (pages 463-465).

'Norman Arlott's Bird Paintings' Norman Arlott, twice winner of *BB's* 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and one of the three judges for this year's competition, has painted 28 of his favourite birds: 12 from Europe, eight from America and eight from Africa. These paintings are reproduced in colour on artpaper to form a bound book which can, if so desired, be cut to become 28 ready-to-frame 30 × 25 cm prints.

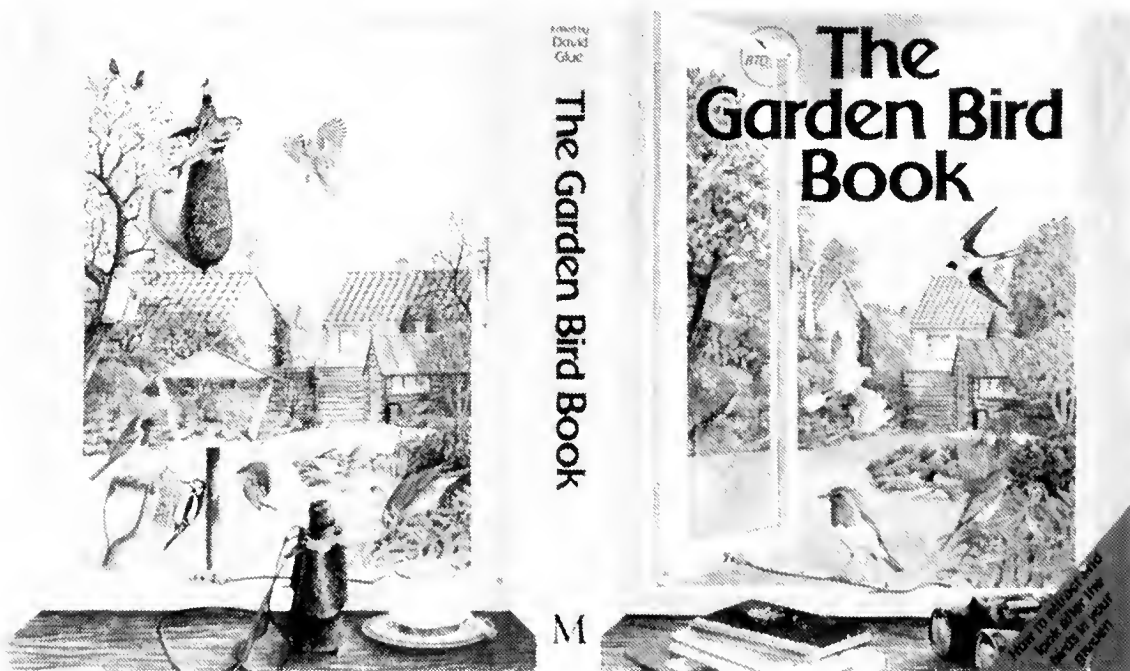
By arrangement with the publishers, World's Work Ltd, this special volume is available not only post free, in UK & Eire, through British BirdShop (see page vii), but also, because of Norman Arlott's special relationship with *British Birds*, at £1.00 less than the usual price (for 'BB' subscribers only): £11.50 instead of £12.50.

'Birds New to Britain and Ireland' This book, including the original accounts of all of the 80-odd species added to the British and Irish list since 1945, and with status and identification updated by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and P. J. Grant (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 100-101), is due for publication by T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd in November or December 1982 or January 1983. The price will be £12.60, but *BB* subscribers have the opportunity to acquire it through British BirdShop at a reduced pre-publication price of £11.50 (post free in UK or Eire). This book will *not* be available through British BirdShop after publication day, so please send in your orders now.

'BWP III' The third volume of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (waders, skuas and gulls) will be published by Oxford University Press in January or February 1983. *BB* subscribers can obtain this volume post free (in Britain and Ireland) through British BirdShop (see page vii). Oxford University Press has agreed to ensure that orders sent to *BB* now will result in *BB* readers receiving their copies of *BWP III* immediately on publication.

It will help *BB* financially if you order your *BWP* through British BirdShop. Please help us to provide you with an even better journal: order your copy of *BWP III* now.

'The Garden Bird Book' This new 224-page book is based to a large extent on BTO information and has been written and edited by BTO staff and members. It covers every aspect of the planning, preparation and maintenance of a garden designed to encourage a large variety of birds. By arrangement with Macmillan, it is available to *BB* readers post free through British BirdShop (see page vii).



Directory of ornithological tours

As a service to subscribers, we are listing, in date order, commercial bird tours planned for 1983. The details are those supplied to us by the firms concerned and we leave it entirely to potential participants to obtain from them the further information (such as prices and detailed itineraries) necessary to make a choice between the available alternatives. Dates are subject to minor alteration due to changing situations and, unless otherwise stated, refer to 1983. Addresses and telephone numbers of the tour operators are given at the end of the list of tours.

Date	Country	No. of days	Tour company	Leader
23 Dec 1982-8 Jan	Thailand	17	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Nigel Redman
26 Dec 1982-9 Jan	Israel	15	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
29 Dec 1982-2 Jan	France	5	Wingspan	Tony Pym
3-29 Jan	Japan	27	KingBird	Ben King
8-23 Jan	Ethiopia	16	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway & J. Franter
9-23 Jan	Israel	15	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
10-31 Jan	Sri Lanka	22	Cygnus	Ron Appleby
21-25 Jan	France	5	Wingspan	Tony Pym
29 Jan-12 Feb	Senegal	15	Sunbird	Will Russell & Michael Kleinbaum
29 Jan-15 Feb	Taiwan & Hong Kong	18	KingBird	Ben King
29 Jan-17 Feb	Thailand	20	Cygnus	David Holman
31 Jan-15 Feb	Trinidad & Tobago	16	Sunbird	David Fisher & Davis Finch
2-19 Feb	Thailand	18	Sunbird	Bryan Bland & Phil Round
4-20 Feb	Tanzania	17	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Steve Madge
5-20 Feb	Kenya (Samburu)	16	Ornitholidays	L. J. Ferguson-Lees
5-23 Feb	Sri Lanka	19	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes & A. J. Holcombe
7-25 Feb	India	19	Cygnus	David Hunt
11-15 Feb	Netherlands	5	Wingspan	Tim Cleeves
12-27 Feb	Trinidad & Tobago	16	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
17-22 Feb	Israel	6	Wingspan	Tim Cleeves
20 Feb-11 Mar	Malaysia	20	Cygnus	Graham Madge
20 Feb-13 Mar	Israel & Egypt	22	Birdquest	Mark Beaman
21 Feb-7 Mar	Japan	15	Sunbird	Will Russell & Noritaka Ichida
25 Feb-1 Mar	Netherlands	5	Wingspan	Tim Cleeves
28 Feb-18 Mar	India & Nepal	19	Birdquest	Steve Madge & Iain Robertson
3-14 Mar	Puerto Rico	12	Wingspan	Dr Peter Evans
5-21 Mar	Costa Rica	17	Wingspan	Jim Lewis
10-21 Mar	Nepal	15	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes
10-31 Mar	Australia	22	Wingspan	John Dare
12-26 Mar	Dominica, St Vincent & St Lucia	15	Wingspan	Dr Peter Evans

Date	Country	No. of days	Tour company	Leader
20 Mar-3 Apr	Israel	15	Birdquest	Per Schlutter & Iain Robertson
26 Mar-10 Apr	USA (Texas)	16	Wingspan	Jon Dunn
26 Mar-11 Apr	Israel	17	Cygnus	David Holman
31 Mar-16 Apr	USA (Texas)	17	Cygnus	Peter Clement
5-19 Apr	Israel	15	Sunbird	David Fisher & David Yekutieli
6-20 Apr	Spain	16	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
10-24 Apr	Morocco	15	Ornitholidays	I. J. Ferguson-Lees
10-17 Apr	Spain (Pyrenees)	8	Ornitholidays	A. J. Holcombe
14-24 Apr	Israel	11	Wingspan	Tony Pym
15 Apr-5 May	USA (Texas)	21	Sunbird	Rich Stallcup & Jon Dunn
16-24 Apr	Spain	9	Birdquest	Mark Beaman
16-30 Apr	Morocco	15	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Steve Madge
17-24 Apr	Mallorca	8	Sunbird	Peter Grant
18 Apr-22 May	China	35	KingBird	Ben King
23 Apr-7 May	Spain (SW)	15	Ornitholidays	B. Craddock
24 Apr-8 May	Morocco	15	Sunbird	David Fisher & Dr J. T. R. Sharrock
24 Apr-8 May	Israel	15	Wingspan	Tim Cleeves
30 Apr-14 May	Mallorca	15	Ornitholidays	M. Chandler
30 Apr-15 May	Turkey	16	Cygnus	Paul Dukes
2-16 May	USSR (Central Asia)	15	Cygnus	Mike Densley
4-13 May	Spain	10	Sunbird	Frank King
4-19 May	Canada (Ontario)	16	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
5-20 May	USA (Virginia)	16	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway & M. Shepherd
5-22 May	Turkey	18	Birdquest	Mark Beaman & Iain Robertson
7-16 May	France	10	Cygnus	
7-20 May	Greece (NE)	14	Ornitholidays	R. Firmin
7-21 May	Greece	15	Wingspan	Tony Pym
7-21 May	Yugoslavia	15	Ornitholidays	C. Nicholson
7-22 May	Turkey	16	Chris Slade	Chris Slade
8-22 May	Austria (Lake Neusiedl)	15	Ornitholidays	G. Bennett
9-20 May	France (The Camargue)	12	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes
14-23 May	France	10	Sunbird	Mike Everett & Tony Williams
14 May-4 Jun	Peru	22	Wingspan	Dr Robert Tindle
18 May-2 Jun	USA & Canada (Michigan & Ontario)	16	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
25 May-14 Jun	USSR (Siberia & Mongolia)	21	Sunbird	David Fisher & Peter Grant
29 May-19 Jun	USSR (Siberia, central Asia & Caucasus)	22	Birdquest	Mark Beaman & Iain Robertson
2-16 Jun	Iceland	15	Wingspan	Tony Pym
4-18 Jun	Austria (High Alps)	15	Ornitholidays	Roy Croucher
4-21 Jun	USA (Yellowstone Nat. Park & Idaho)	18	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway & J. Tranter
5-17 Jun	USSR (Siberia)	13	Birdquest	Steve Madge & Nigel Redman

Date	Country	No. of days	Tour company	Leader
6-23 Jun	Canada (Vancouver & Rockies)	18	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes & A. J. Holcombe
12 Jun-1 Jul	USA (Alaska)	20	Sunbird	Davis Finch & Jon Dunn
18 Jun-19 Jul	Zambia & Zimbabwe	22	Wingspan	Rhett Butler
Jun-Jul	Spain	12	Cygnus	Ted Griffiths
6-22 Jul	Zimbabwe	17	Ornitholidays	I. J. Ferguson-Lees
13 Jul-20 Aug	Borneo, Malaysia, Sumatra	39	KingBird	Ben King
17-28 Jul	Spain	12	Wingspan	Tony Pym
24 Jul-5 Aug	USSR (Siberia)	13	Birdquest	Iain Robertson
24 Jul-17 Aug	Ecuador	25	Wingspan	Paul Greenfield
27 Jul-14 Aug	India (Kashmir & Ladakh)	19	Sunbird	Mike Hodgson
28 Jul-17 Aug	Galapagos & Amazon	21	Wingspan	Dr Robert Tindle
1-17 Aug	Rwanda	17	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes
1-19 Aug	Kenya (Lake Turkana)	19	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway
6-26 Aug	New Guinea	21	Sunbird	Bruce Beehler
7-24 Aug	India (Kashmir)	18	Cygnus	Cliff Waller
13-27 Aug	Greece	15	Sunbird	David Fisher & Frank King
13-28 Aug	Kenya	16	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Mark Beaman
13-29 Aug	Peru	17	Birdquest	Steve James & Steve Madge
13-29 Aug	Sri Lanka	17	Wingspan	Tony Pym
13 Aug-3 Sep	Kenya	22	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Mark Beaman
17 Aug-4 Sep	USA (California)	19	Wingspan	Jon Dunn
21 Aug-4 Sep	Austria (Lake Neusiedl)	15	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes
10-24 Sep	Turkey	15	Ornitholidays	M. Chandler
10-24 Sep	Turkey	15	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
10-25 Sep	Turkey	16	Chris Slade	Chris Slade
16-25 Sep	Turkey	10	Sunbird	David Fisher
17-25 Sep	Turkey	9	Chris Slade	Chris Slade
17 Sep-2 Oct	Kenya (Indian Ocean)	16	Ornitholidays	A. J. Holcombe
17 Sep-2 Oct	Kenya (Lake Victoria & Mount Elgon)	16	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway
7-23 Oct	Tanzania	16	Ornitholidays	S. Boyes & G. Bennett
20 Oct-11 Nov	Kenya	23	Sunbird	Don Turner & Will Russell
4-19 Nov	Mexico	16	Sunbird	Kenn Kaufman & Bryan Bland
6-20 Nov	Canary Islands	15	Wingspan	Nigel Tucker
11-26 Nov	Gambia	16	Birdquest	Iain Robertson & Nick Dymond
12-26 Nov	Ethiopia	15	Cygnus	A. Smith
14 Nov-2 Dec	Nepal	19	Cygnus	Peter Clement
19 Nov-4 Dec	Ethiopia	16	Ornitholidays	L. G. Holloway & S. Boyes
19 Nov-4 Dec	Gambia	16	Cygnus	
23 Nov-10 Dec	Gambia	18	Wingspan	Netta Robinson
17 Dec-1 Jan 1984	Kenya (Indian Ocean)	16	Ornitholidays	A. J. Holcombe

All enquiries and queries should be directed to the travel firms concerned:

Birdquest Ltd, 8 Albert Road East, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire W15 9AL. Tel. 061-928 5945.

Cygnus Wildlife World-wide Holidays, 96 Fore Street, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1PY. Tel. 0548 3181.

KingBird Tours, PO Box 196, Planetarium Station, New York NY, 10024 USA.

Ornitholidays (Regd), 1-3 Victoria Drive, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 2PW. Tel. 0243 821230.

Chris Slade, 8 The Grange, Elmdon Park, Solihull, West Midlands. Tel. 021-742 5420 & 021-705 5535.

Sunbird, David Fisher, PO Box 76, Sandy, Beds SG19 1DE. Tel: 0767 82377.

Wingspan, 1st Floor, Arvalee House, Clifton Down Road, Bristol BS8 4AH. Tel. 0272 741773.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Europe's raptors *Naturopa* is the Council of Europe's conservation and environmental journal, produced by the European Information Centre for Nature Conservation, in English, French and German. Its role is education through information and comment: it is widely read and, hopefully, influences at least some of the politicians and bureaucrats who control much of what happens in Europe. The whole of number 40 (1982) deals with raptors and owls and their conservation, with 11 main articles by various European experts, all of whom highlight current problems and actual or possible solutions. Let us hope it has a wide circulation where it really matters...

Portuguese Christmas count The transatlantic tradition of an annual Christmas Bird Count had not been followed in Europe until last year. This exercise has been conducted mainly in the United States and Canada, but also in Central and South America, the West Indies and Bermuda. The 82nd annual count was carried out in 1981. In 1981, the Centro Estudos Migração e Protecção das Aves (CEMPA) decided to co-operate in this interesting programme and it seems that their effort represented the first such count in Europe. A group of 13 observers counted the birds within a radius of 12 km from the co-ordinates 38° 48' N, 8° 48' W, about 65 km east of Lisbon (Santo Estevao), on 22nd December 1981 from 8.30 a.m. until 4.30 p.m. The habitat there is 75% woodland, 20% cultivated fields and 5% stream-side. On 22nd December, both fresh and salt water were open, but wild food was in poor supply. Some of the interesting species observed were White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (5),

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* (175), Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (1), Red Kite *Milvus milvus* (1), Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (2), Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* (29), Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (29), Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (1), Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana* (221), Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* (1) and Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* (7). A total of some 16,506 birds of 81 species was recorded. (Contributed by R. O. Vicente)

Wild London One of the best newsletters we see is *Wild London*, produced by the London Wildlife Trust. An amazing amount of news and information (and even a goodly selection of illustrations) is crammed into its eight pages. If you live or work in or around the metropolis, why not give it a try? Further details from London Wildlife Trust, Peckham Settlement, Staffordshire Street, London SE15 5TF.

Bough Beech birds The Kent Trust for Nature Conservation has recently published its booklet *Birds of Bough Beech*. Situated between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, Bough Beech Reservoir has become one of Kent's best known inland birdwatching sites. The 20-page booklet, compiled by Roy Coles and Geoffrey Burton, describes the history of the reservoir and its nature reserve since its creation in 1970 and includes a list summarising the status of birds until 1981. Attractively produced, with line-drawings and photographs, the booklet can be obtained at the nature reserve's information centre (open weekends), or by post from KTNK, 125 High Street, Rainham, Kent, price £1 plus 25p postage. (Contributed by PJG)



188. Bird Illustrator of the Year award presentation, July 1982: left to right, Norman Arlott (judge), Dr J. F. R. Sharrock (judge), Rodney Ingram (2nd), Keith Colcombe (winner of The Richard Richardson Award), Robert Gillmor (judge), Keith Shackleton (President of Society of Wildlife Artists), Alan Harris (1st) and Darren Rees (3rd) (*R. J. Chandler*)

BIY & RRA presentations The presentation of the awards to this year's winners of the competitions for the title of 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and for 'The Richard Richardson Award' took place at The Mall Galleries in London on 27th July (plate 188). For the second year, this Press Reception was held in conjunction with the Society of Wildlife Artists, whose own annual exhibition opened at The Mall Galleries on the following day, and the prizes were presented by the President of the SWLA, Keith Shackleton. The winners' entries were displayed at the Galleries throughout the Society's exhibition. We are pleased to report that these arrangements will be continued next year.

Discovery of a species new to Britain see footnote*

75 years ago Jack Mountford has sent us the following extract from the 'Notes and comments' section of *The Naturalist* (1907). No comment is needed from us! 'During the past few years we have chronicled the appearance of many new magazines. Most have had a meteoric existence—came into

the world with a great glare, as quickly "fizzed out", and left not a wrack behind. Others had a more lingering career; but eventually sickened and died. One or two still linger, though apparently suffering from "galloping consumption". In most cases their fate was evident from the first. A few, a very few, seem still healthy. To these last has been added "British Birds," which, judging from the first part just received, is most likely to be a success. The study of birds in recent years has been followed by an enormous number of serious students, as well as by a still greater number of drivelling dabblers, many of whom evidently consider that to buy (or borrow) a field-glass, to spend a week-end spying sparrows, and to have access to a few monographs are the only qualifications for writing books and articles to periodicals. Page after page of the most blithering piffle are in this way printed. In "British Birds", however, there will be none of this. With such capable editors as Messrs H. F. Witherby and W. P. Pycraft we can depend upon having nothing but the best, and "Part I" of the new publication certainly is evidence of this.'

*FOOTNOTE.



Footprint of *Rallus brittanicus* Boswall.

IFWP at Monte Carlo The third Annual Meeting of the International Federation of Wildlife Photography was held in Monte Carlo over the week-end of 11th-13th June 1982 and was attended by delegates from all member countries (except Sweden): Britain, France, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, West Germany and Yugoslavia. Each member country brought 12 large prints in colour or black-and-white to present a two-week exhibition held in the Jardin Exotique in Monte Carlo. Almost half of the exhibition, which was opened by the Mayor of the city, was devoted to birds, Britain being well to the fore in the very high standard of work presented. The next meeting is scheduled for March 1983 in Budapest; before then, a competition will be held in the Association of British Natural History Photographic Societies to find the 20 best prints to represent Britain. (*Contributed by Don Smith*)

Inland Revenue Sponsored Birdwatch?

The State of New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs are the joint sponsors of the New York Breeding Bird Atlas project, now in its third full season. Page 11 of the project's 'Handbook for Workers 1981' notes: 'Income Tax Deduction. Expenses that you incur (gasoline, motels, etc.) while surveying can be claimed on your income tax as a contri-

bution to a non-profit organisation. Keep careful supporting records.' A useful illustration of a cultural difference between our two countries! Perhaps the BTO should approach the Inland Revenue before organising its next project? (*Contributed by Michael J. Thomas*)

BBC Silver Jubilee The BBC Natural History Unit was rather late in letting us have the press release blurb about its Silver Jubilee, and by the time you read this it will be well on the way to completing its 26th year. Nevertheless, we take this opportunity to salute and congratulate the Unit for 25 years of splendid and stimulating programmes. All those involved can be justifiably proud of the way they have brought wildlife from all over the globe into our homes, educated us and, indeed, caused many of us to broaden and develop our own interests. May the next 25 years be even more successful!

New recorder for Gwynedd R. S. Thomas, Sarn-y-Plas, Y Rhiw, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, is now the recorder for Gwynedd (Caernarvonshire); F. A. Currie is recorder for Gwynedd (Merionethshire) and Ivor McLean remains as recorder for Gwynedd (Anglesey) (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 544 and 75: 237)

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**

All dates refer to July, unless otherwise stated.

High pressure in the Atlantic brought cool northwesterlies for the first week, then, as pressure also rose over the Continent, hot humid air arrived from the south, with frequent thunderstorms. By 18th, an anticyclone was centred over the country, with

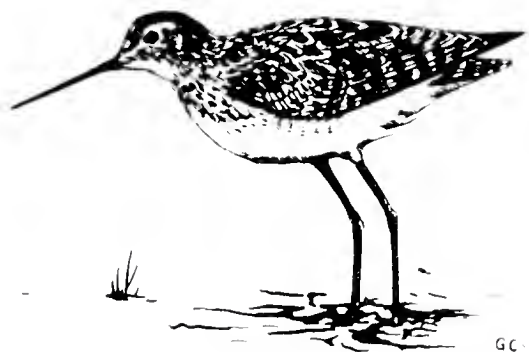
easterly winds, turning northerly as the high pressure moved slowly westerly.

Wading birds

Reports of the autumn return-movements of passage waders noted few large numbers.

Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* began appearing at the end of the month and a





GC

now expected early reports of Nearctic species included **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* from South Walney (Cumbria)—their first—on 31st, and Cley on 2nd August; a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 31st; and a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* in Lincolnshire, also on 31st. Reports of the larger wading species included a **Little Egret**

notable concentration of **Ruffs** *Philomachus pugnax* occurred at Cliffe (Kent), with up to 30 counted (plates 189 & 190). A few **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* were seen on the British east coast from 18th, all showing adult plumage. These early movements, probably involving non-breeding individuals, as usual included a few vagrants. A further July record of **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* came from Cley (Norfolk) from 6th to 13th, with a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* there also on 13th, and followed by another **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* there from 23rd to 25th. A **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* was also reported from the north Norfolk coast during the second week. The



189 & 190. Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, adult male (right) and adult female (below), Kent, July 1982 (*R. J. Chandler*)





191. Tern, probably Elegant *Sterna elegans* but perhaps Royal *S. maxima*, Co. Down, July 1982
(John Marchant)

Egretta garzetta on Brownsea Island (Dorset), a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* at Radipole Lake (Dorset), and a **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* at Sullfield (Norfolk) from 10th to 17th.

Terns and seabirds

As last month, tern records were again notable. The **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans*, yet to be accepted as such, was still present at Greencastle (Co. Down) on 18th (plate 191), and two reports of **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* came from Hoylake (Merseyside) on 8th and Pennington (Hampshire) on 10th. A seldom-stay-long **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* remained three days, however, at Little Paxton Gravel-pits on 1st and 3rd August and at nearby Grafton Water (Cambridgeshire) on 2nd. **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* appeared during the easterlies at Clew on 13th, Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 20th and at Martin Mere (Cheshire). The wide variety of

vagrant gulls reported was most unusual: more in keeping with winter than summer. An **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoideus* at New Brighton (Merseyside) on 20th was not the usual one seen there in winter, and a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* in Glamorgan was yet another summer record of this once extreme rarity. The now usual records of **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were increased by one at Hoylake from 10th (plate 192), and **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were found at The Bull (Co. Wexford) on 15th and Chew Valley Lake on 26th. A **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* passed Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 21st and a **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* remained at Fair Isle throughout the month. The rarer shearwaters are not normally expected in July, but a few **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* were seen at Filey Brigg on 31st and a **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* at Spurn (Humberside) on 10th.

Passerines

A few unusual reports were received, most interesting being a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* on 7th at nearly the same locality on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) where one turned up last year in spring. Other records of southern European species were of **Woodchat Shrikes** *Lanius senator* at Dawlish Warren (Devon) on 7th and at Hastings (East Sussex) on 10th and 11th, and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *L. minor* at Birling Gap (East Sussex). A **Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* was the only notable July vagrant at Spurn, followed on 1st August by an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*, another arriving at Dungeness (Kent) on the same day.



Odds and ends

Reports of species in other categories have been sparse but notable. Three **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were present throughout the month near Delamere (Cheshire) and, at the end, two were found at Chew Valley Lake and one at Blagdon Lake (Avon). Also at Chew Valley Lake on 31st was a flock of 245 **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera*. A **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* at Livermore (Suffolk) on 10th posed the usual 'escape' problem. Raptor reports featured an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* at Chew

Valley Lake from 24th and a **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* in southwest Scotland. Finally, an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was watched at Woodbridge (Suffolk) on 4th.

Latest news

Early September: **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*, Minsmere (Suffolk); three **Sabine's Gulls**, and a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli*, north Norfolk; **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*, Walney; two potential 'firsts': **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* Teesmouth (Cleveland) and **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus*, Sker Point (Mid Glamorgan).



192. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, first-summer moulting to second-winter, Merseyside, July 1982 (K. W. Horton)

Reviews

The Living Birds of Eric Ennion. Text by John Busby. Victor Gollancz, London, 1982. 128 pages; profusely illustrated in colour and black-and-white. £9.95.

It was with great delight that I approached the act of reviewing this aptly titled book, although it was not many years ago that I looked upon Ennion's work as simple 'kids' stuff'. I then rated it well below that of the many artists who painted their birds to a high-gloss finish, showing every feather in meticulous detail. Fine brushwork, yes, but I realised after more field experience that their works lacked a certain something: life! It was then, with little hints from my mentors, that I took a second look at the likes of Ennion: artists who could sketch, and not just sketch the shape of a bird, but include within that shape all the freedom and vitality of the bird in the wild. This Ennion did, and, in his portrayal, be it a quick pencil drawing, a slightly more elaborate line-wash sketch or a finished painting, he was second to none, showing with the minimum use of materials, but maximum effect, all the postures and many moods that a bird in its natural surroundings can produce.

This new book, with a fine introduction and commentary by John Busby, shows to great effect all of Ennion's skill in putting on paper that which he observed, not only with the artist's tools but also with the writer's, for he was most accomplished with the written word as well as being a top grade artist.

Split into eight sections, plus a bibliography and chronology, the book covers his work on waterbirds (including eight pages on ducks), terns and gulls, waders, woodland birds, open-country and garden birds, game birds, and birds of prey. Although probably favouring the water and waterside birds, his work did not waver when away from this habitat, birds at open moorland or a woodland edge being equally well transferred from his observant eye to the page. A quick glance through the sections proves this: wash and line sketches of herons preening and Wigeon at rest and feeding from the waterbird section are on a par with a page of flycatchers from the woodland section. In fact, the flycatcher sketches are a perfect example of how great an observer of bird life he was. Apart from the bird in hovering flight (noted by Busby in the commentary) the portrait of two birds preening and wing stretching, actions that were probably quite rapid, are captured in a superbly accurate and naturally balanced cameo.

The last section of the book deals with the drawing and painting of birds, using the few notes that he had compiled before his death for a book on that subject (unfortunately it will never be published; many of his thoughts on the matter were kept in his head and never written down). Those that are available provide aspiring artists with sound, knowledgeable reasonings.

'Birds are not hypotheses: they are alive, very much alive, and not to be shorn of personality, not to be plucked from their surroundings.' This sentence, included in the book, and taken from Ennion's Book *The British Bird*, says it all. He practised what he preached and this new book confirms it. Perhaps there should have been more of his completed paintings; but never mind, what there is between these pages is a treasure. I thoroughly recommend it to all, artistically inclined or not: it is as near as one can get to one's own field observations.

NORMAN ARLOTT

An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palaearctic. By Colin Harrison. Collins, London, 1982. 322 pages; 693 maps in colour; many figures and line-drawings. £12.95.

Colin Harrison describes this well-produced book as a companion work to *The Birds of Britain and Europe* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter and John Parslow. It is clearly also an up-dating of the classic *Atlas of European Birds* by Professor Dr K. H. Voous, now just over 20 years old. It admirably fulfils the first aim, for the maps, elegantly and clearly designed by Crispin Fisher, are almost six times as large as those possible in the field guide, with a consequent gain in the detail shown. Moreover, they cover a much wider area, reaching from the southern limits of the Sahara north to the Arctic islands of Spitsbergen and Franz Josef Land, and reaching east to well beyond the Aral Sea, so including even parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It loses somewhat, however, in comparison with Voous, whose maps so valuably covered the world breeding range, and who benefited from the greater space for more extensive discussions of distributional factors, habitat, food, nests, and movements for each species. Against this, Voous covered only 419 European species, whereas Harrison includes 639 West Palearctic species, with maps showing winter and passage as well as breeding ranges.

Indeed, Harrison's species range is even wider, for he deals with a further 167 species in special maps covering the whole Palearctic (or, in a few cases, the Holarctic). These additional species fall into two main groups—ecological counterparts, where two or more species, usually members of the same genus or family, replace each other in similar habitats, and replacement species, where a closely related group of species have become adapted to different types of habitat in the Palearctic. There may well be debate, in some instances, on how the author has interpreted these concepts, which, in the present state of ecological knowledge, must often involve some inspired guesswork, and whether, for some groups, the Palearctic basis is sufficiently wide. Yet these additional maps are of great value in portraying the distribution of many species little known to most readers. His ideas on ecological counterparts and replacement species are explained in detail in an introductory essay which also covers at length, and with much insight, factors influencing bird distribution: climate, vegetation and the effects of time (including fossil evidence, glaciations, refuges and human activity).

To sum up, for most readers perhaps, this book will appeal mainly for the superb maps, covering more species than are available elsewhere, supplemented by black-and-white vignettes of all the species, by nine artists ranging from Norman Arlott to Ian Wallace. Many will also be stimulated by the author's exciting ideas on the puzzles of bird distribution. All birdwatchers will find it a useful and attractive addition to their library.

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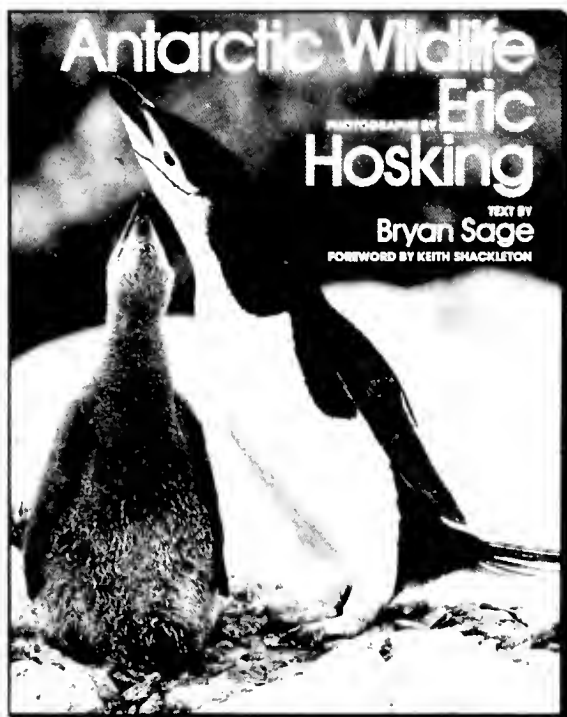
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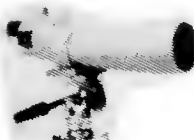
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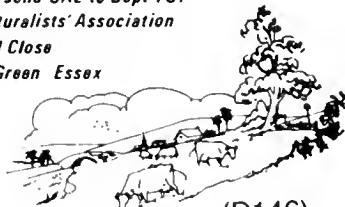
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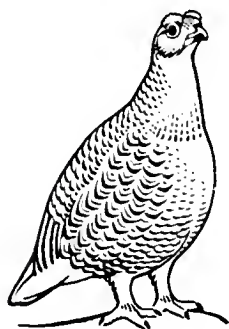
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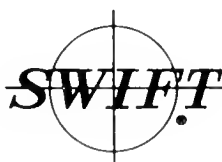


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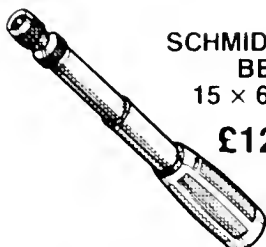
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British Birds

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 11 NOVEMBER 1982



Editorial

We are delighted that the increase in number of subscribers this year enables us, for the second time, to expand *BB* to a record 80-page issue. An even larger circulation would result in more frequent large issues, to the benefit of all subscribers. So, if you know anyone who you think would be interested in reading *BB* but who is not yet a subscriber, please send us their name and address, and we will send them a free sample copy and subscription leaflet.

Books for Christmas

If you want to give (or to receive) a book as a present for Christmas, the following would be among our current choices:

Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book Bill Oddie (Eyre Methuen; paperback £1.50)

The Birdwatcher's Dictionary Peter Weaver (Poyser £5.00)

**The RSPB Book of British Birds* Peter Holden, J. T. R. Sharrock & Hilary Burn (Macmillan £5.95)

**Birdwatcher's Yearbook 1983* John Pemberton (Buckingham Press £6.50)

**A Notebook of Birds 1907-1980* Jim Flegg (Macmillan £6.95)

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Birdwatching on Inland Fresh Waters M. A. Ogilvie (Severn House £8.95)

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*Those with an asterisk are available (post free to UK or Eire; add 50p for elsewhere in the world) through British BirdShop (see page vii).

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1981

*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by D. J. Britton*

This is the twenty-fourth report of the Rarities Committee. So far, and, as usual, excluding Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, 707 records have been accepted for 1981, an acceptance rate of 83%. About 113 records are still under consideration, as well as a few for earlier years, including several claims of Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* and the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* in Kent in March 1979 (now with the BOU Records Committee); two Cory's Shearwaters off St Agnes, Scilly, in October 1979 (now on its third circulation); and a Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* at Weybourne, Norfolk, in October 1979 (now on its first circulation, following identification research).

Once again, the Committee is grateful to D. J. Britton for compiling the species totals and species comments. Irish records are adjudicated by the Irish Records Panel and the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee, and we are grateful for permission to include in the species comments details of accepted records, and to the respective secretaries, Kieran Grace and Mrs P. M. Vizard, for supplying them, thus providing a complete review of rare birds in Great Britain and Ireland. For the first time this year, we include Channel Islands records. These are now adjudicated by the Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 74: 314), and we thank Roger Long and Trevor Copp for their liaison over records. Channel Islands records are not included in the species totals, which are only for the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland.

Records of distinctively marked subspecies which are rare in Great Britain are included as usual. It should be emphasised that inclusion does not necessarily imply that the individual originated from within or near the geographical range of that subspecies, but only that it resembled that subspecies. This approach is implied by the established convention that an individual 'showed the characters of' a particular subspecies.

As usual, we thank the photographers who have sent us their pictures of rarities, a selection of which appears in this report. Any photographic evidence should always be included when submitting records; if photographs are available, sight of them is invariably necessary before acceptance.

We also wish to encourage all observers to submit drawings of the rarities which they observe. These need not be artistically expert to be of great value in the assessment process. Some of the best drawings submitted with records are included in this year's report, not merely as decorations, but to illustrate the usefulness of field sketches.

We wish to express our gratitude for the support given to the Rarities Committee by observers, county and regional recorders, and bird observatories, without which this report would not be as complete and accurate as

it is. We also acknowledge the co-operation of the BTO, the RSPB and the Nature Conservancy Council. For readily given assistance and advice on various topics, we thank P. R. Colston, A. R. Dean, Jon Dunn, J. Fitzharris, E. G. Hancock, Dr C. J. Harrison, P. Harrison, P. A. D. Hollom, I. G. Johnson, R. Hudson, A. R. Kitson, Dr A. G. Knox, I. H. J. Lyster, J. H. Marchant, M. A. Ogilvie, A. J. Prater, I. S. Robertson, Will Russell, Dr D. W. Snow, Lars Svensson, D. I. M. Wallace and John Weske.

Records should be sent to the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP, preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder. A copy of the list of species considered by the Committee can be obtained from MJR (note that ten species will be removed from the list at the end of 1982, as already announced: *Brit. Birds* 75: 337-338), as can copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form: the latter should be used, or its format followed, when submitting reports.

The constitution and aims of the Committee, and the procedure followed when considering records, are explained in a fact sheet obtainable from M. J. Rogers (address at end of this report). PJG

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedure followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1980 report (74: 453-495). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if trapped or found dead, and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order. In accordance with our declared policy (see *Brit. Birds* 68: 1-4), the new county names have been used, and observers are asked to bear this in mind when submitting records.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminable records, and this also applies to observations of the two pratincoles *Glareola*

and of such difficult groups as albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, vernacular names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the totals in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the honorary secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 56, 4)

Cleveland Hartlepool, adult, 14th to 22nd February (T. Francis, R. Little *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 235).

Highland Near Noss Head Lighthouse, Wick, Caithness, adult, dead, 22nd January (K. W. Banks per Mrs P. M. Collett and I. H. J. Lyster), now at Royal Scottish Museum.

Northumberland Holy Island, adult, 25th November (A. Heavisides).

Shetland Whalsay, adult, first seen November 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 455), still present 17th to 25th January (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*). Holm of Heogland, Unst, adult, 17th May (A. Brown *et al.*).

1979 Highland Off Loch Scresort, Rhum, adult, 10th August (A. H. J. Harrop, M. Thomas).

1980 Shetland near Hascosay, adult, 14th November (M. Heubeck, D. M. Pullan, R. J. Tulloch). Whalsay, adult, 4th to 11th and 24th November (*Brit. Birds* 74: 455), still present 1981, see above.

(Arctic Russia, Siberia and Alaska) Also, an adult at Carnsore Point, Co. Wexford, on 16th May 1979: the third ever for Ireland. The splendid Hartlepool bird provided hundreds of photographers with unprecedented opportunities. It returned regularly to within a few metres of the quayside to take submerged dead fish deposited by the local fishing fleet.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 7, 0)

1980 Dorset Radipole, then Studland, to at least 26th April (*Brit. Birds* 74: 455), again 27th (D. Page *et al.*).

(North America)

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 21, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, adult, 21st February to mid August (per R. J. Tulloch).

1976 Shetland Hermaness, Unst, adult, 28th April to 18th August (*Brit. Birds* 70: 412), still present 30th (Dr M. E. Witherick).

1979 Shetland Hermaness, Unst, adult, 31st March to 18th August (*Brit. Birds* 74: 455), still present 6th September (Dr M. E. Witherick).

(Southern oceans) The Hermaness adult returned very early, its earliest previous arrival date being 15th March 1980.

Albatross *Diomedea* (3, 37, 1)

Cornwall Trevoze Head, 4th December (S. M. Christophers).

(Southern oceans) There is one other December record, a Black-browed Albatross at Foreness Point, Kent, on 16th December 1978.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (a few, 18, 965, 1, 495)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, four, 30th June; one, 4th July (H. P. K. Robinson); 26th (G. C. Hearl, H. P. K. Robinson, L. P. Williams); three, 4th August; three, 5th (L. P. Williams *et al.*); one, 9th (H. P. K. Robinson, L. P. Williams); two, 22nd; one, 14th September (H. P. K. Robinson); 19th September (D. J. Barker, S. C. Hutchings); at least another three, 19th (S. V. Ashby, C. J. Vines). Near Wolf Rock, 1st October (P. Kemp).

Devon Prawle Point, 6th June (P. Kemp).

Dyfed Strumble Head, two, 26th August (G. H. Rees); one, 28th (N. A. Lethaby).

Grampian Peterhead, 24th August (M. Innes).

Gwynedd Holyhead, Anglesey, 6th July (E. Jones); 6th August (C. J. Todd).

Humberside Spurn, 11th June (R. P. Council); 16th August (R. P. Council, S. M. Lister *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 16th May (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, D. B. Rosair); 17th (C. Abrams, G. R. Ekins).

Norfolk Salthouse, two, 31st May (W. E. Blake, M. C. Marsh, S. Piotrowski).

Scilly St Mary's, 11, 14th September (A. R. Collins); one, 25th (P. Bagguley).

Strathclyde Troon Harbour, Ayr, 9th June (J. L. Burton).

Tyne & Wear Whitburn, 24th July (P. T. Bell, S. Howatt).

Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 22nd August (M. J. Grunwell, H. J. Whitehead).

1980 Devon Off Plymouth, 27th July (M. Parsons). Hopes Nose, 21st September (T. F. Edwards).

1980 Dyfed Strumble Head, 7th September (D. C. Palmer, C. W. Woodhead).

1980 Merseyside Meols, 30th August (J. G. Jones).

1980 Scilly Seven Stones Reef, at least 12, 16th August (D. B. Hunt *et al.*).

(East Atlantic and Mediterranean) Also 1,258 off Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork: 20 on 6th July, singles on 28th and 29th, three on 3rd August, 869 on 12th, 319 on 13th, 42 on 4th September and three on 5th. Elsewhere in Ireland: one at Killoughter, Co. Wicklow, on 17th May; one off Greystones, Co. Wicklow, on 7th July; off Loop Head, Co. Clare: one on 12th August, three on 13th, two on 22nd and 180+ on 24th; and finally a late record of one off Ramore Head, Co. Antrim, on 30th August 1980. Before the exceptional influx in 1980, with 2,851 in Britain and 14,396 in Ireland, the record total was a mere 380 in 1968 so the 1,446 in Ireland in 1981 is very high. The British records were outstanding for their geographical spread; never before has this majestic 'mini albatross' been recorded in a dozen countries in a year.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 53, 0)

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, and southern oceans) None in Britain, for the third year running, but, as in 1980, a single small shearwater, probably this species, in Ireland; this time off Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 20th July.

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 5, 0)

1980 Dyfed St George's Channel, 12th September (B. A. E. Marr, W. E. Oddie).

(Southern oceans) Perhaps an enterprising ornithological travel firm could organise a pelagic bird trip to enable us to get to grips with this and other elusive 'tubenoses'?

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (50, 6, 2)

Gwent Magor, 29th October to at least 3rd January 1982 (C. Jones, P. G. Lansdown, Dr W. A. Venables *et al.*) (plates 34 & 35).

Strathclyde Kilmacolm, Renfrew, 4th November to 9th January 1982 (D. L. Clugston, J. Cumming).

1980 Dorset Tincleton, found shot, 12th November (R. A. Ford, P. Taylor *et al.*), now at County Museum, Dorchester.

(North America) With only two English records, and three in Ireland, during the preceding two decades, this trio within 13 months is outstanding. The Magor scene was quite superb. Many hundreds of observers not only saw this difficult species, but also actually got better views than most had ever had of Bittern *B. stellaris*. This was thanks to the very helpful attitude of the local society whose reserve this beautiful bird chose to grace. They certainly 'keep a welcome in the valleys'!

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 131, 4)

Dorset Radipole, juvenile, 2nd August to 4th September (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, ♂, 18th to 19th May (B. S. Duffin, T. A. Lawman).

Warwickshire Brandon Marsh, juvenile, 19th to 20th September (J. E. C. Baldwin, S. A. Lane, A. P. Skidmore *et al.*).

1976 Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♂, 26th May (H. Andrew).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australasia) Also, one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 31st May and, in the Channel Islands, a juvenile at St Ouen's, Jersey, on 13th June. Another poor showing.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 113, 6)

Devon Torrington area, adult, 7th June to about September (E. V. Azzopardi, T. Beer, Mrs P. Shelton).

Dyfed Bosherton Pond, Pembrokeshire, juvenile, 11th October (A. C. Bowes, S. J. Sutcliffe).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, adult, 4th May (P. N. Raby).

Norfolk Brundall, not aged, 19th May (B. D. Harding).

Scilly St Mary's, second-summer, 22nd to 30th April (D. B. Hunt, R. O'Reilly *et al.*).

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, adult, 8th to 9th May (R. Balharry, J. N. Dymond *et al.*); same, Whalefirth, Yell, 1st to 3rd June (R. J. Tulloch *et al.*).

Warwickshire Coombe Abbey, first-year, 26th to 29th May (K. Deakin, M. W. Finnemore).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) The Devon bird, as well as staying for a longer time than most vagrants, was tame and was regarded by local observers as an escape from captivity; it has been excluded from the totals.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 16, 2)

Cornwall St Germans/Polbathic Creek area, 20th April to 27th May (R. Smaldon *et al.*) (plate 193).

Devon Slapton Ley, 12th April (P. J. Hopkin, D. M. Norman, L. Price *et al.*).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) These exceptionally early records are the first during April since at least 1958 and may conceivably involve the same bird. A pair probably bred at Lac de Grandlieu, Loire Atlantique, during 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 268), well outside their normal range in France and within 400km of Devon.



193. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Cornwall, May 1981 (colour print: A. J. Croucher)

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 25, 6)

Cornwall Trewornan Bridge and Camel Estuary area, sub-adult, 7th to at least 17th November (S. M. Christophers, R. Wake *et al.*) (plate 33), later St Mabyn, December, found dead 27th (per D. J. Barker).

Dyfed Crundale area, Pembrokeshire, about 5th to at least 14th April (K. J. S. Devonald, J. W. Donovan *et al.*), considered additional to 1980 individual, see below.

Gwent Llandenny, near Usk, dead, 1st March (D. J. Cooksey, W. F. Hampshire), remains retained by D. J. Cooksey.

Gwynedd Aber, Caernarvonshire, 25th January to 13th March (C. M. Swaine *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plates 121 & 122). Llyn Alaw, Anglesey, 15th January to 24th May (A. Barnes, J. & P. Clark, A. & G. Davies *et al.*) (plate 194).

Hereford & Worcester See 1980 below.

Yorkshire, North Near Helmsley, 5th to at least 7th April, probably since 29th March (P. J. & Mrs K. Dunn, Mr Ellerby).

1980 Dyfed Haverfordwest, Pembroke and Narberth areas, 11th December to at least 17th January 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 457).



194. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Gwynedd, February 1981 (J. R. Hully)

1980 Hereford & Worcester St Weonards, Herefordshire, 10th December to about 20th February 1981 (A. Marchant *et al.*).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics, nearest breeding colony in south France) An extraordinary influx. Following the concentrated arrival of four during mid December 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 457-458), another two were found in January 1981 and a further three during March/April. Seven were at or close to the west coast. The Cornish occurrence in November 1981 may have been unrelated to the earlier records. Interestingly, one or two pairs bred at Lac de Grandlieu, Loire Atlantique, in northwest France in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 268). The species normally breeds in France only in the Camargue, so the possibility of breeding in Britain may not be that remote.

We are grateful to W. G. Harvey for pointing out an oversimplification in the last report. Whilst it is true that escaped individuals of the Asiatic race *coromandus* are readily separable in the field by extensive buff on the head, this feature is apparent only in breeding plumage, which lasts but a few months a year. The *coromandus* at Slimbridge, Gloucester (*Brit. Birds* 74: 459), was present from 29th June 1980 to at least 16th November, and a sighting over Slimbridge on 25th January 1981 was probably of this bird; it was subsequently found dead in Avon.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 240, 16)

Cornwall See 1980 below.

Cumbria Dunnerholme Marshes, 27th to 28th June (D. & Mrs P. Hamson, B. & Mrs M. Pickthall, I. Young); probably same, Duddon Estuary, 26th to 28th (per M. Hutcheson).

Devon Yelland, Taw-Torridge Estuary, 19th April (C. J. Cadbury, T. Davis, A. J. Vickery).

Dorset Lodmoor, 25th May (M. Cade, B. E. & D. Slade, A. J. L. Smith *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 26th May (R. A. Barrett, C. A. Bury, M. Fuller *et al.*), possibly same as Dorset individual.

Highland Annat, Wester Ross, 30th April (C. Atkins, P. S. Loud). Moidart, Inverness, 29th May to 4th June (C. E. K. Scouller *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 30th to 31st May (D. Belshaw, P. N. Collin *et al.*). Yantlet and Elmley, 6th July to 31st August (T. E. Bowley, V. Wasey).

Lancashire Leighton Moss, 26th June to 7th July (per M. Jones).

Norfolk Holme, 26th May (P. R. & Mrs M. R. Clarke *et al.*), believed also at Titchwell, at least 27th; probably same, Salthouse and Cley area, 2nd to at least 14th June (N. Bostock, D. J. Britton, J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Possibly another, Holme, 30th July to 3rd August (P. R. & Mrs M. R. Clarke *et al.*); probably same, Flitcham, 22nd (E. J. Cross). Has also been reported from Snettisham.

Nottinghamshire Misson, 9th to at least 20th August (L. J. Degnan, R. & Mrs C. Stevens, N. P. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Orkney Swartmill Loch, Westray, 29th October to 24th November (W. A. S. Bews, J. Kent, Mrs M. A. Scott).

Suffolk Reydon Marshes, 16th May (N. R. Jones, J. R. Skinner).

Sussex, East Cuckmere Haven, 27th May (L. G. Catlin), possibly same as Dorset and Hampshire individuals.

1980 Cornwall Individual at Hayle (*Brit. Birds* 74: 458) was first seen 18th October and first seen at St Just in Roseland on 23rd, remaining to 17th March 1981 (per D. J. Barker).

1980 Northumberland Cresswell Pond and area, 15th June (M. J. Levett, F. J. M. & Mrs J. P. Lindsay *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Also, five singles in Ireland: at Derrynane, Co. Kerry, from 21st April to 5th May; at Lough Beg, Co. Cork, on 10th and 11th May; possibly the same at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 11th May to 13th June; at Kinvarra, Co. Clare, on 8th July; and at Tramore Back Strand, Co. Waterford, from 15th to 17th September. Late Irish records are of singles at Inchydoney, Co. Cork, from 6th to 10th June 1979 and at Quoile Pondage Area, Downpatrick, Co. Down, on 17th June 1980. A return to form: this total has been exceeded only twice before, 17 in 1974 and the exceptional 47 in 1970.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (90, 293, 21)

Avon Gordano Valley, adult, 10th May (A. Silcocks).

Devon Slapton Ley, adult, 28th to 29th March (R. M. Belringer, M. R. Edwards, J. P. Martin).

Dorset Lodmoor, immature, 26th to 31st May (M. Cade *et al.*).

Glamorgan, West Oxwich, adult, 2nd and 9th May, two, 9th (P. Akers, R. E. Harbird *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, first-summer, 7th May (J. R. Coleman).

Kent Fordwich, adult, 18th to 28th April (J. A. Eyre, M. B. Shaw *et al.*) (plate 195). Minnis

195. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Kent, April 1981 (*David M. Cottridge*)



Bay and Reculver, sub-adult, 24th May (C. H. Hindle). Yantlet, 11th July (N. R. Davies *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Skidbrooke and Donna Nook area, immature, 18th May (M. Mellor). Gibraltar Point, adult, 26th May (P. R. Boyer).

Norfolk Horsey Broad, sub-adult, 24th May (M. Cross, P. Jordan, J. Rowley).

Northamptonshire Ringstead Gravel-pits, immature, 24th to 27th September (A. E., C. H. & F. E. Crozier, M. Goodman).

Oxfordshire Stanton Harcourt, juvenile, 22nd August (M. G. Wilson).

Scilly St Agnes, immature, 9th April; same, St Mary's, 11th, found dead 14th (K. Gould *et al.*). Tresco, adult, 10th May (G. Lightfoot, D. Page, A. Roberts).

Suffolk Minsmere, 12th April; same, Walberswick, 12th to 21st (A. & Mrs A. Botwright, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, probable adult, 4th April (R. M. Lord, R. J. Saunders *et al.*). Lancing, adult, 28th May (B. F. Forbes).

Wiltshire Coate Water, first-summer, 16th May (G. L. Webber).

1972 Suffolk Minsmere, immature, 2nd August (R. A. Barrett *et al.*).

1979 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, adult, 2nd August (T. Hobson).

1980 Kent Stodmarsh, adult, 10th July (D. Feast).

1980 Northumberland Newton Pool, adult, 22nd September (I. Davidson, D. L. Woodfall).

1980 Orkney North Ronaldsay, immature, 1st to 8th September (J. A. W. Cutt, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

1980 Suffolk Lamarsh, immature, 2nd to at least 6th September (I. Grahame, J. F. Todhunter), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 74: 494), now accepted on further evidence.

(South-central Eurasia, north to Netherlands and Africa) Also one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 9th to 13th June, only the fourth for Ireland. Although records during the last 20 days of April are quite common (about 20% of all records), earlier arrivals are rare. There were only four during the past 23 years: 18th March 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 66: 334), 31st March 1971 (65: 325), 4th April 1959 (53: 413) and 8th April 1964 (58: 355). There is also one 'winter' record: 17th to 20th February 1963 (57: 263). Thus, the three early records during the year under review are noteworthy, in particular the Devon bird on 28th and 29th March.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 20, 0)

(Iberia, and Eurasia from France to China, also southern Africa) The much-watched individual at Whitstable/Reculver, Kent, from 5th to at least 26th October (plates 14 & 15) was rumoured to have escaped from Howlett's Zoo, Port Lympne, and to have been shot later: investigations are still in progress.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (70, 201, 8)

Cumbria Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumberland, 25th June to 3rd August (B. Bailey, Misses S. Grieg & M. Holloway).

Glamorgan, South Roath Park, Cardiff, two, 19th November (R. G. Smith).

Kent Dungeness, 20th April (P. Day, N. Howard, M. Sneary *et al.*).

Lancashire Near Garstang, 6th May; between there and Scorton, 7th (M. Ainscough, Dr C. Paice, P. J. Thompson *et al.*). Scorton, ninth-year ♂, freshly dead (shot), 31st October (Mrs R. Gibbons), ringed Liesveld, Zuid-Holland, 15th July 1978 (per BTO and Ringing Office, Arnhem).

Strathclyde Gryfe Reservoir, Renfrew, at least 22nd and 23rd May (D. Carnduff, D. L. Clugston *et al.*). Possibly same, Cumnock, Ayr, 29th May to 19th June (R. H. Hogg, B. McKeechie *et al.*).

Sussex, East Near Hastings, 6th April (R. H. Walpole *et al.*).

1980 Northumberland Lynemouth, 13th April (M. S. Hodgson).

(Central and south Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa) Two

late Irish records are of singles at Fedney, Dromora, Co. Down, on 6th June 1980 and at Downpatrick, Co. Down, on 21st June 1980: perhaps the same individual. The Dutch recovery is interesting, but one wonders what impact such illegal shootings have on our national reputation in Europe. A Night Heron ringed in the USSR met the same fate in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 494).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 23, 1)

Kent Stodmarsh, two, since 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 459) to end April and from late August to end of year, summering as usual at Sheppey, but absent briefly in early May (see Suffolk) (per D. W. Taylor).

Suffolk Minsmere, two, 8th to 9th May (P. V. Hayman, G. J. Jobson *et al.*), presumed, on size characters, to have been Kent individuals.

(Cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans) Also a presumed wandering individual was seen at Lough Beg, Co. Cork, on 7th March; at Minane Bridge, Co. Cork, on 9th; and at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 3rd April into 1982. Those who believe the Kent birds to be of natural origin can take considerable comfort from the ibises' wanderings to Suffolk, but they remain apparently the only 'resident population' in Europe, and as such must be viewed with considerable suspicion; they are nevertheless counted in our totals, and very welcome to stay!

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 60, 3)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 26th December 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 459) to 4th March. Pair, 18th December to 7th March 1982 (R. Goater, R. Graham, N. Smart *et al.* per M. A. Ogilvie). Immature, 31st December to 5th March 1982 (R. Goater, D. Heywood, G. Moyser *et al.* per M. A. Ogilvie).

1976 Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult present to 4th March (*Brit. Birds* 70: 418), again 7th (R. A. Barrett, L. Cook *et al.*).

1979 Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 24th February (R. A. Barrett, L. Cook), considered same as adults, 30th December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 512) and 4th March 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 498).

1980 Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, first seen 21st December 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 459) to at least 27th February (K. Lane per J. D. Sanders). Another adult, 9th January to 4th March (*Brit. Birds* 74: 459), first seen 5th January (A. V. Moon *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) Another average showing.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 3, 1)

An individual showing characters of the North American and east Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, colloquially known as 'Black Brant', was recorded as follows:

Cornwall Wadebridge, 13th to at least 15th November (S. M. Christophers, G. C. Hearl *et al.*).

(Arctic North America and east Siberia) The first occurrence away from the large flocks of Brent Geese in southeast England. The earlier influx of American Wigeons into Cornwall may not be coincidental.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 88, 1)

Highland Udale Bay, Ross & Cromarty, ♂, 3rd to at least 12th January (R. H. & Mrs M. T. Dennis *et al.*).

1973 Cheshire Rostherne Mere, ♀, 13th May to 16th October (R. Harrison, D. A. Rogers *et al.*).

1980 Orkney Steiness, ♂, 13th May (N. Picozzi).

(North America) An unprecedented influx into Cornwall during September and October is still under review, the biggest problem being to decide just how many there were.

Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 147, 13)

Drakes showing characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as 'Green-winged Teal', were recorded as follows:

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 26th April (C. P. Kelly).

Cheshire See 1980 Cheshire

Cornwall Hayle, since 31st October 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 460) to at least 2nd February (per D. J. Barker); possibly same, at least 5th to 31st October (S. M. Christophers, J. Miller, P. Vines *et al.*). Stithians Reservoir, 12th December (R. J. Hathaway).

Dorset West Bexington, 13th to 15th February; possibly same, Langton Herring, 6th to 7th May (C. Cook).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, at least 12th to 23rd November (S. J. Moon, J. A. & Mrs A. C. Pratt, S. Smith).

Highland Inverness, 29th December to at least 10th January 1982 (R. H. Dennis *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 25th November (D. Buffery, S. P. Clancy).

Norfolk Cley and Salhouse, 11th to 24th April, two, 19th to at least 22nd (M. R. Alibone, Miss E. J. Raybould, S. K. Welch *et al.*).

Shetland Sandwater, 14th March to 4th April (C. Kightley, J. D. Okill, I. Sandison *et al.*). Fetlar, 5th April (J. N. Dymond, R. Wynde).

1978 Strathclyde Loch Gorm, 7th to 9th May (A. F. G. Walker).

1980 Cheshire Rostherne Mere, 16th to 24th, and 31st December to 3rd January 1981 (J. P. Guest, R. J. Halsey, T. H. Wall *et al.*).

1980 Cornwall Hayle, since 26th October 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 460), to 9th February (per D. J. Barker). St John's Lake, since 18th December 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 460), to 12th January (per D. J. Barker).

1980 Warwickshire Kingsbury Water Park, 17th April (J. E. Fortey).

(North America) Also a concentrated discovery of five drakes in Ireland: at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 1st to 17th January; at Boyne Estuary, Co. Louth, on 11th; at Kinsalebeg, Co. Waterford, on 14th; at Thurles, Co. Tipperary, on 17th; and at Carran Lough, Co. Clare, on 22nd February. Another typical crop.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 10, 1)

Gwynedd Aber, Caernarvon, ♂, first seen 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 499), to at least 22nd February (per Dr P. J. Dare).

Highland North Kessock, Inverness, ♂, 11th October to at least March 1982, when paired with ♀ Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*.

Scilly Tresco, ♀, first seen 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 461), present throughout year; again mated with Mallard; three young on 8th June, but only two by 19th July (per D. B. Hunt).

(North America) The propensity for this species to break the rules of avian sexual conduct does not help birders hoping to see the species in Britain. It is especially difficult on the vast mud-flats at Aber to separate the genuine Black Duck from its wretched offspring.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 76, 3)

Devon Near Aveton Gifford, ♀, 31st December (D. J. Hopkins, J. C. Nicholls, D. M. Norman).

Durham Washington, ♀, 14th to 21st February, trapped 21st (T. I. Mills, A. Temple *et al.*), subsequently removed to Slimbridge (plate 196).

Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, ♂, 16th to 19th February (R. B. Hastings, Mrs W. Roberts, P. J. Strangeman).



196. Female Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Durham, February 1981 (K. Baldridge)

Somerset Porlock Marsh, ♂, 17th April (A. J. Bundy, J. G. Hole, D. E. Paull).

1980 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, two ♀♀ or immatures, 29th September to 17th October (C. Campbell, M. Wright *et al.*).

1980 Humberside Hornsea Mere, ♀ or immature, 16th November (R. G. Hawley) (fig. 1).

(North America) A late Irish record, in more ways than one, is of a female shot at Glarryford Bog, Co. Antrim, on 5th November 1980. The Durham bird was regarded as an escape from captivity and is not counted in the totals.

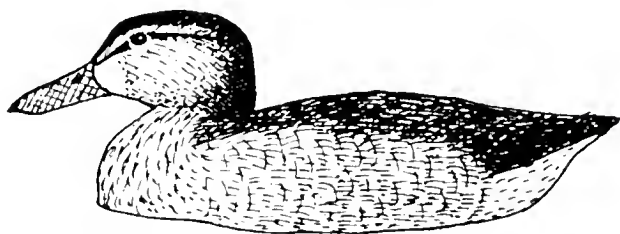


Fig. 1. Female or immature Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Humberside, November 1980 (R. G. Hawley)

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 127, 11)

Cornwall Siblyback Reservoir, two ♀♀, 2nd January (R. M. Belringer, J. C. Nicholls), possibly same as Slapton Ley, Devon, individuals last seen 23rd November 1980, see 1980 Devon below. Helston, ♂, 7th January to 4th March (D. Wood *et al.*), possibly same as Drift Reservoir individual, late 1980, see 1980 Cornwall below.

Cornwall/Devon Tamar Estuary, two ♂♂ & ♀, 1st January (E. Griffiths, J. M. Randall).

Devon Burrator Reservoir, ♂ and ♀, since 1980, to at least April (per P. W. Ellicott), see 1980 Devon below.

Dumfries & Galloway Soulseat Loch, ♂, 5th January (B. C. Forrester, D. Given, A. Williams), possibly returning individual of winter 1979/80 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462).

Dyfed Bosherton Pond, ♂, 1st November (P. G. Akers, A. Fawcett, N. N. Machin *et al.*). Dryslwyn, Carmarthen, ♂, 20th to 27th December (R. H. Davies).

Hampshire Blashford area, ♂, since 29th December 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), to at least 4th January (T. M. J. Doran, R. N. Simpson).

Hertfordshire Amwell, ♂, 17th April to 14th May, and 25th to 26th May (R. Aberdeen, J. Fitzpatrick, A. V. Moon *et al.*).

Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂♂, 6th January to 21st February, and 7th April to 4th May, two, 8th January, 21st February, 13th April (N. A. Bell, P. Dove, K. Rotherham *et al.*), presumed one of same, Hornsea Mere, 24th to 26th March (A. M. Allport) and presumed returning individual, Tophill Low Reservoir, 9th to 10th, and 19th November (K. Rotherham), and Hornsea Mere, 16th (R. G. Hawley). Both individuals presumed same as 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 23rd November 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), presumed same, 1st to 28th January, see 1980 Kent below.

Scilly Tresco, ♂, since 30th September 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), present at least January.

Shetland Tingwall and Asta Lochs and occasionally East Voe, Scalloway, ♂, 23rd to 29th May, 9th and 19th June (N. Borrow, J. D. Okill *et al.*) (fig. 2).

Somerset See 1980 Somerset below.

Strathclyde Gadloch, Lanark, ♂, 18th January and 21st February (B. Zonfrillo *et al.*), same, Woodend Loch, 19th February (D. L. Clugston), presumed returning individual of early 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462).

Wiltshire Corsham Lake, ♀, 27th January to 7th February, first seen 17th October 1980 (J. C. & Mrs M. J. Rolls).

1979 Devon Upper Tamar and Wistlandpound Reservoirs, see 1980 Devon.

1979 Oxfordshire Blenheim Park, ♂, at least 7th February (*Brit. Birds* 73: 500), again, 22nd (R. A. Barrett).

1979 Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, 27th to 29th January, and 8th to 9th May (*Brit. Birds* 73: 500), was ♂, not ♀ as stated.

1979 Warwickshire Kingsbury Water Park, ♂, 5th to 6th May (J. E. Fortey *et al.*).

1980 Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♀, 15th June to 9th August (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), to mid August when to Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset (*Brit. Birds* 75: 327); ♀ of captive origin, 3rd August to 21st September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462; described 75: 327-328).

1980 Cheshire Billinge Flashes, ♂, 1st to 8th June (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), presumed same, 27th August (J. P. Guest).

1980 Cornwall Drift Reservoir, ♂, 24th October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also 16th to 17th November (per D. J. Barker) and possibly same as Helston individual, 1981.

1980 Devon Slapton Ley, two ♀♀, 26th October to 9th November (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also 23rd (per P. W. Ellicott) and possibly same as Siblyback Reservoir, Cornwall, individuals, 2nd January 1981. Wistlandpound Reservoir, ♂, 11th to 14th December 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 500) to 24th January (per P. W. Ellicott). Upper Tamar Reservoir, ♂, 8th December 1979 to 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 500), to 6th January (per P. W. Ellicott). Burrator Reservoir, ♀, 7th to 9th December (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also 20th to 21st (R. Smaldon), 4th January 1981 (D. J. & P. F. Goodfellow) and to at least April (per P. W. Ellicott); two immature ♂♂, 8th to 10th December (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also at Kitley Pond, Yealmpton, 29th November and 28th

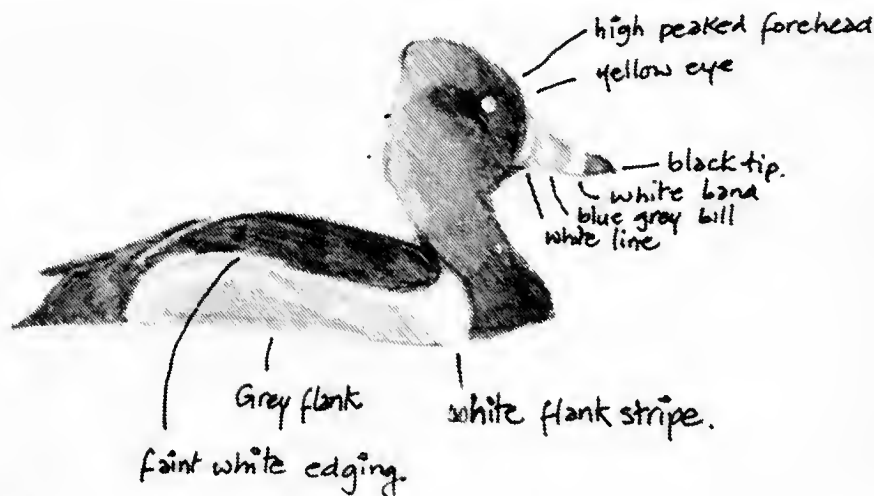


Fig. 2. Male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Shetland, May 1981 (Nik Borrow)

December (J. M. Clatworthy, J. C. Nicholls); ♂, 20th to 21st December (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), first seen 16th (per P. W. Ellicott), again, 4th January 1981 (D. J. & P. F. Goodfellow) and to at least April (per P. W. Ellicott), also at Fernworthy Reservoir, 9th December 1980 (J. C. Nicholls).

1980 Highland St John's Loch, Caithness, ♂, 17th to 26th February (Dr D. M. & Mrs J. Edge).

1980 Kent Dungeness, ♂, first seen 23rd November (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), was not present 24th November to 31st December (per D. W. Taylor).

1980 Northumberland Newton Pool, ♂, 15th June to 2nd July (L. Carpenter, C. Slator, D. L. Woodfall *et al.*).

1980 Somerset Durleigh and Hawkridge Reservoirs, ♂, at least 9th March (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), probably same, Hawkridge Reservoir, 18th to 19th March, and Durleigh Reservoir, 17th April (per B. Rabbitts). Cheddar Reservoir, ♀, 17th August (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*), same, 26th August to 13th October (per B. Rabbitts) and same as Chew Valley Lake, Avon, individual, 15th June to mid August (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462; 75: 327). Orchardleigh Lake, two immature ♂♂, 22nd November (J. B. O. Rossetti), remained there and Durleigh and Sutton Bingham Reservoirs, Marshton Park and Ashmolead Reserve area to at least early May 1981 (D. J. Chown, Dr A. G. Duff, J. B. O. Rossetti *et al.*) (see also *Brit. Birds* 75: 327-328).

1980 Strathclyde Woodend Loch, ♂, 21st to 27th January (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also 18th January and 19th February (P. R. Gordon).

1980 Wiltshire Corsham Lake, ♀, 17th October to 1st December and 1981 (J. C. & Mrs M. J. Rolls).

(North America) There were two drakes at Gougane Barra, Co. Cork, from 18th January to 8th March, and one drake, presumed one of these two, at the same locality from November into 1982. Also a drake at North Balancing Reservoir, Co. Armagh, on 4th and 7th November 1980.

For each species, our total indicates the number of new birds recorded during the year, but for this former great rarity it is also interesting to look at the total numbers recorded. Following none in 1975 and six in 1976, there were 27 (25 new) in 1977, 27 (13 new) in 1978, 34 (29 new) in 1979, 46 (35 new) in 1980 and 24 (11 new) in 1981. Does this considerable reduction during 1981 herald a return to former status?

Eider *Somateria mollissima* (0, 1, 0)

An individual showing characters of the northern race *S. m. borealis* was recorded as follows:

1978 Lothian Musselburgh, ♂, dead, 2nd September, subsequently discovered in skin collection at Royal Scottish Museum (G. F. Miller, D. S. Raines).

(East Arctic America, Greenland, Iceland and Spitsbergen) The publication of this occurrence, drawing observers' attentions to this race, will doubtless lead to further records. Two other corpses are already under consideration.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 97, 3)

Grampian Blackdog, ♂, 11th to 23rd June (R. A. Schofield *et al.*).

Highland Golspie/Embo area, at least one ♂ throughout year (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*); two ♂♂, 14th November, together with possible hybrid with Eider *S. mollissima* (P. J. Ewins).

Shetland Scatsta Ness, Sullom Voe, ♂, 3rd March to at least end of June and 25th October to end of year (M. Heubeck *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♂, 15th to 20th October (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Strathclyde Port Glasgow, ♂, at least 14th November (R. H. Hogg *et al.*), considered same as individual previously reported (*Brit. Birds* 74: 463); see also 1977 Strathclyde below.

1977 Strathclyde Great Cumbrae, ♂, 24th April (S. Holloway), considered same as individual, Woodhall, 29th November (*Brit. Birds* 71: 495) and on frequent occasions in Clyde area since (*Brit. Birds* 74: 463). Habitual movements from site to site indicate that Ayrshire

records dating back to winter 1971/72 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 314) probably relate to this individual (per R. H. Hogg).

1980 Highland Golspie and Loch Fleet area, ♂, to at least October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 463), again, 13th November (R. Webb).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The drake at Rosbeg, Co. Donegal, which was first seen on 21st April 1974, was again reported during April and December. The longevity of individuals loyal to sites suggests that the total may have been inflated over the years by equally long-lived but wandering individuals. It remains a great rarity in England, and is yet to be recorded in Wales.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (5, 8, 0)

Orkney Papa Westray and Westray, ♂, 7th May to 24th June (S. Davies, D. Lea, E. R. Meek *et al.*), considered same as 1980 individual first seen 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464).

Western Isles Vorrán Island, South Uist, ♂, present throughout year to at least 31st October (J. J. Gordon *et al.*), first seen 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464).

(Arctic Russia to extreme northwest Canada) The Committee would again like to thank all those who report these long-staying individuals. The South Uist drake was honoured by the presence of two females on 13th April 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 313), but sadly they did not hit it off.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* (0, 2, 0)

Individuals showing characters of the American and east Siberian race *M. n. americana*, colloquially known as 'Black Scoter', were recorded as follows:

1979 Grampian Findhorn, Moray, ♂, 29th December (D. Waring).

1980 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, ♂, 16th September (H. P. K. Robinson).

(Arctic North America and east Siberia) The first records of this striking race. The Cornwall drake was accompanied by a non-adult drake and female, which may have been of the same race, but for the time being the Committee felt unable to assess any individuals other than adult males.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 93, 6)

Devon Dawlish Warren, ♂, since 31st December 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464), to 22nd April, also off Budleigh Salterton, 7th January (per P. W. Ellicott *et al.*).

Fife Shell Bay, ♂, 29th April (P. M. Ellis).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, immature ♂, 11th October, same as West Glamorgan individual (S. J. Moon *et al.*) (plate 16).

Glamorgan, West Eglyws Nunnysd Reservoir, immature ♂, 10th to 12th October (C. Hurford, D. C. Palmer, M. C. Powell).

Grampian Spey Bay, Moray, ♂, 23rd to 24th April (C. Parnell, K. Proud). Blackdog and Balmedie area, ♂♂, 18th June to 22nd August, two, 20th June, presumed same as 1980 individuals (see below) (P. Fisher, R. J. Miller, R. M. Ramsay *et al.*).

Highland Golspie and Loch Fleet, Sutherland, ♂, 1st and 15th February (per A. R. Mainwood), 14th March (A. Cawthrow, J. Hewitt, D. Hursthouse) and 16th April (A. R. Mainwood), presumed same as earlier years (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464).

Norfolk Hunstanton, first-year ♀, 2nd March to 9th May (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

1980 Fife Pathead Sands, Kirkcaldy, second-winter ♂, 17th to 18th February (D. Dickson).

1980 Grampian Blackdog and Drums (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464): Blackdog, ♂, 1st August to 3rd September, two, 21st and 23rd August (per M. Bell); probably one of same. Drums, 7th to 8th October (I. J. Andrews, C. R. McKay, R. C. Prentice *et al.*).

(North America) Also a sub-adult drake at Clogher Head, Co. Louth, on 19th December 1978 and two in Rosslare Bay, Co. Wexford, during 1981:

an immature from 7th February to 24th March and a drake on 3rd May. England had its first occurrence on a reservoir on 25th October 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464), and, not to be outdone, Wales follows suit within a year.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 40, 8)

Dorset Portland, 11th April (M. C. Powell *et al.*); presumed same, Corfe Castle, 12th (M. & Mrs E. Read, R. E. & Mrs E. A. Scott) and 14th (G. Lightfoot, M. L. Passant, J. Rayner *et al.*). Stanpit Marsh (formerly Hampshire), 21st May (N. J. Adams, M. A. Hallett).

Kent Pluckley and Wye area, 4th April (D. Elliott, M. J. Palmer, K. C. Privett *et al.*). Hatch Park, 27th to 28th May (P. Chantler, M. Davies, T. Loseby).

Suffolk Eastbridge, 7th June (J. C. Eaton, P. Milford, M. Otley).

Tyne & Wear Near Sunderland Airport, 21st May (P. Collins, W. Orr, J. Pattinson *et al.*).

Wight St Catherine's Point, 26th April (P. J. & Mrs V. J. Barden, D. J. Hunnybun, S. Linington).

1980 Devon Prawle Point, 4th May (D. J. Hopkins, J. L. Spry, Mr & Mrs J. Woodland).

1980 Kent Dungeness, 28th May to 1st June (P. Simons, M. Tickner).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Ireland at last had its first record, one at Killougher, Co. Wicklow, on 11th May. An escaped individual, bearing a green ring, was at large in north Norfolk between January and May. The eight presumed wild individuals constitute a new record total. With breeding recently established in Belgium (*Brit. Birds* 73: 257 & 75: 26), we can but hope . . .

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 6, 0)

Shetland Fair Isle, immature, 7th April (C. D. Rowley). Lunning and Whalsay area, immature, 5th December to 1982 (M. Heubeck *et al.*). Both were regarded as part of the stock introduced on Rhum (*Brit. Birds* 71: 475-481), and the former as possibly the same as one ringed on Rhum and found dead, poisoned, in Caithness (per R. H. Dennis).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) The last true vagrant to Britain and Ireland was probably the one in Cornwall for two weeks in December 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 318), which was the first for 11 years.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (11, 7, 0)

(South Europe, west-central and east Asia and northwest Africa) Largely because of the conflicting opinions on the Blackrock, Cornwall, individual of September-October 1979, as shown by the large number of descriptions submitted, the Committee has been unable to reach a decision. We again appeal for good photographs, but in the meantime the record remains 'not accepted'. Of the descriptions submitted, 23 were in favour of identification as Lesser Kestrel, four were undecided, and four were in favour of Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 229, 14)

Cornwall Helston & Church Cove area, second calendar year, 10th to at least 20th September (G. Dormer, D. & P. Wood).

Humberside Spurn, first-summer ♂, 1st June (R. P. Council, R. Scott, B. R. Spence).

Merseyside Ainsdale (formerly Lancashire), ♂, 16th May (B. & N. Hunt, G. Tye, A. Willcocks).

Norfolk Bacton, ♀, 24th to 25th May (M. J. Pill *et al.*). Wells, ♂, 12th August (P. Kirby).

Northamptonshire Near Stony Stratford, sub-adult ♀, 10th July (D. R. Collins, M. Todd).

Orkney Westness, Rousay, first-year ♂, at least 30th May to 4th June (D. Lea, J. Yorston).

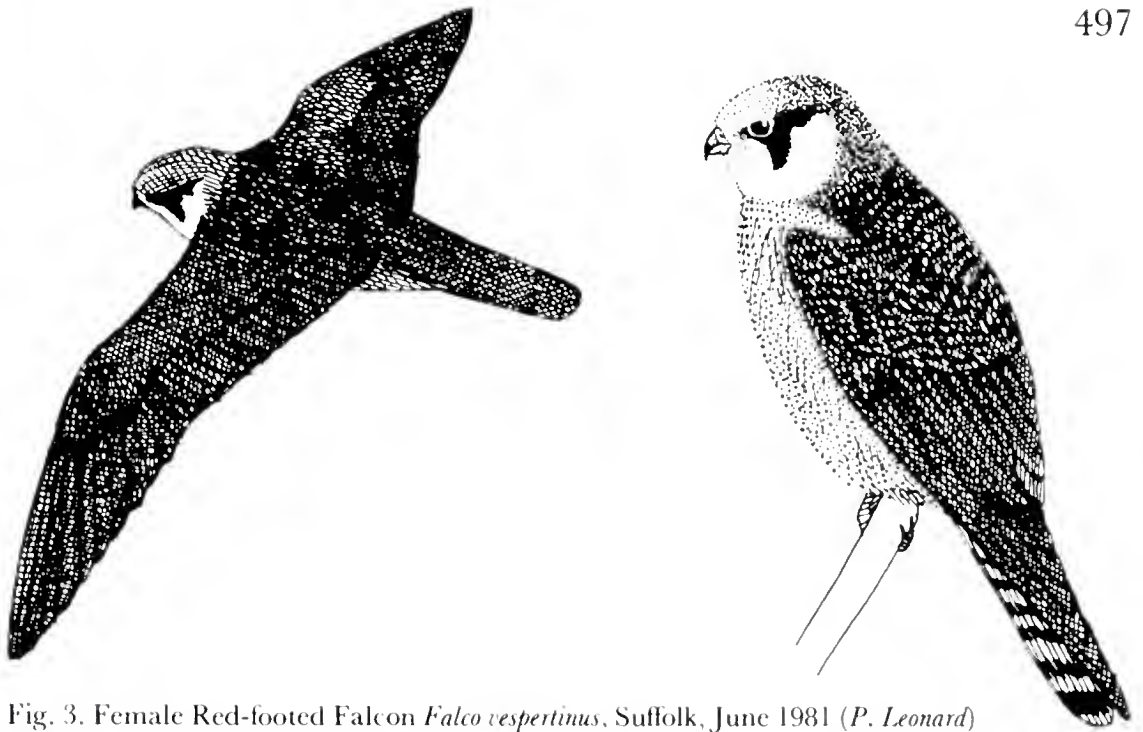


Fig. 3. Female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Suffolk, June 1981 (P. Leonard)

Shetland Valsgarth, Unst, first-summer ♂, 23rd May to 6th June (C. J. & J. A. Hazell, J. H. & Mrs J. C. Isom, R. J. Quinnell *et al.*). Presumed another, Mid Yell, 16th May to 4th June (A. Brown, R. J. Tulloch *et al.*). Bixter, ♂, 27th May (B. P. Walker). Eshaness, ♀, 5th June (M. Heubeck). Whiteness, ♂, 7th June (G. Bashford, M. S. Chapman).

Strathclyde Endrick Mouth, ♀, 17th May (T. Weir), same, Woodend, 19th (R. K. Pollock).

Suffolk Westleton Common, ♀, 2nd June (P. Garrity, P. Leonard) (fig. 3).

Yorkshire, West Allerton Water, ♀, 19th to 20th May (P. Warham).

1978 Hampshire Near Burley, ♂, 30th May (J. K. Bowers, M. C. & P. Combridge).

1979 Hampshire New Forest, ♂, 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465), also 21st (M. Jones). Cole Henley, ♀, 30th July (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465), was ♂, not as stated.

1980 Northumberland Alwinton, immature ♀, 17th to 18th May (T. R. Cook, B. & P. Galloway).

1980 Somerset Highbridge, first-summer ♂, 22nd to 23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465), also 24th (per B. Rabbitts).

(East Europe and south from Siberia) A return to normal form. The arrival of four in Shetland is noteworthy (the adult males recorded at localities 10km apart are assumed to have been the same bird).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 61, 2)

Shetland Scatsta, at least 15th March (B. P. Walker).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Also, one at Donegal Bay, Co. Donegal, on 17th September.

Sora Rail *Porzana carolina* (5, 1, 1)

Gwynedd Bardsey, adult, trapped, 5th August (P. J. Roberts).

(North America) An extraordinary record. Found self-trapped by the incredulous warden and photographed in the hand, this adult posed none of the identification problems that surrounded its only recent predecessor, an immature at St Agnes, Scilly, from 26th September to 9th October 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 443-447).

American Coot *Fulica americana* (0, 0, 1)

(North America, northern South America and Hawaii) One at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 7th February to 3rd April (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 139)

was the first record for Britain and Ireland. This much twitched, though rather boring, bird had long been expected and will surely be found in Britain before long.

Crane *Grus grus* (many, 791, 5)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, three, 15th December (R. Goater).

Kent Sandwich Bay, two, 27th April to 1st May (D. M. Batchelor, J. D. Russell, M. Woods).

Norfolk Horsey, two, first seen 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465), throughout year (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

1979 Kent Sandwich Bay, 27th October (*Brit. Birds* 73: 503), considered adult, thus additional to Sarre individual (per D. W. Taylor).

1980 Gloucestershire Slimbridge, 31st August (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465), there and Frampton-on-Severn area, 31st August to 5th September, Frampton again, 25th, Cheltenham, 26th, and Slimbridge again, 29th to 30th (per J. D. Sanders).

1980 Gwynedd Holyhead Island, Anglesey, three, 1st May (A. Ferguson, E. O. Jones).

1980 Norfolk Horsey, three returned on 22nd April, not 21st as stated (*Brit. Birds* 74: 465) (per P. R. Allard).

1980 Shetland Loch of Colvister, Yell, 30th May and 3rd to 4th June, and Unst, 6th to 7th (R. P. Jerman, J. Sherratt *et al.*).

1980 Suffolk Bury St Edmunds, six, 2nd November (C. P. Humpage).

1980 Western Isles South Uist, two, 17th May (I. H. Leach).

1980 Yorkshire, West Upper Nidderdale, three, 6th April (P. J. Carlton, A. O'Neill).

(North and central Eurasia, locally south to Turkey) There used to be some scepticism regarding the origin of those seen during the winter, but, with a regular wintering population about 150km east of Paris, France, natural wintering in Britain now seems quite reasonable.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* (1, 0, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer, 26th to 27th April (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddiford, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

(North America, Cuba and northeast Siberia) This must have been a beautiful sight with snow still on the ground. Following its departure, there was much speculation that rediscovery at a less inaccessible locality would lead to one of the great twitches of 1981; alas, this was not to be. The only previous record was at Galley Head, Co. Cork, for about three days up to 14th September 1905, when it was shot (*Brit. Birds* 65: 427).

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* (many, 10, 4)

Kent Walland Marsh, three, 20th December (N. R. Davies *et al.*). High Halstow, one, 29th to 30th December (A. Parker *et al.*).

(Central and south Eurasia, discontinuously from Portugal to Pacific) This species is prone to periodic good years. There were three in 1970, three in 1979 and four in 1981, but only four others since 1958. The party of three is without precedent in recent decades and may have been associated with a minor influx into the Netherlands during the same winter (*Dutch Birding* 4: 36).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 65, 3)

Cornwall Newquay, 17th to 19th April (S. M. Christophers, R. Smaldon, D. L. Thomas).

Kent Elmley, 10th to 11th May (C. D. Abrams, P. N. Collin, D. Perrin *et al.*).

1980 Norfolk Hickling, 20th to 26th May (J. Charman, M. J. Seago *et al.*).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas) Also one at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 20th April and what was probably the same bird at Killoughter, Co. Wicklow, from 10th to 17th May: the first

Irish record since 1949. The 1980 Norfolk bird is presumed to be that also recorded in Kent and Essex (*Brit. Birds* 74: 466).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 30, 1)

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 11th July (M. J. Tarrant).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) A typical record.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 11, 2)

Cambridgeshire Fenstanton, Hunts., 12th to 18th August (M. J. Everett *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, juvenile, 14th October (R. M. Lord, M. Shrubb), probably since 7th, see pratincole.

(South Russia and west Asia) Although there are two November records of Collared Pratincole, the present species has not previously been identified later than 9th September.

Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* or *G. nordmanni* (36, 53, 4)

Dyfed Bosherton Lakes, Pembrokeshire, 13th April (D. A. Henshilwood, Dr R. Smith, S. Young).

Sussex, West Church Norton, 7th October (S. Beresford, Mrs D. H. Herring), probably same as Black-winged Pratincole nearby on 14th.

Also a late Irish record: a juvenile at Ballycarry, Co. Antrim, on 4th August 1974. The two previous earliest records since 1958, both Collared Pratincoles, were on 14th May 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 325) and on 15th May 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 466), so the Dyfed bird is a clear month earlier. The totals include those specifically identified.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 24, 1)

Nottinghamshire Lound Gravel-pits, 21st April (R. Crookes, A. Crosland, A. & S. Parker).

1976 Cambridgeshire Bainton Gravel-pits, Huntingdon, 6th to 27th March (G. F. Walthew).

1980 Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh, 28th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 466, plate 270), also 29th (P. Combridge, M. A. Stewart *et al.*).

(North America, West Indies, Peru to Chile) The Nottinghamshire bird was probably the latest ever in spring. The first British record, near Christchurch, Hampshire (now Dorset), is imprecisely dated, as April 1859.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 3, 2)

Humberside Spurn, 29th July to 6th August (E. Crawford, J. Rose, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Lincolnshire North Coates Point, 7th August (H. Bunn, J. Leece), same as Humberside individual.

Norfolk Breydon, 17th April (P. R. Allard, T. E. Boulton, T. W. Fairless *et al.*).

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia) As with Ring-billed Gull, this ungainly plover was perhaps grossly overlooked prior to its discovery in December 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 568-573). Now that many hundreds of good observers have learned its identification features, it could well become an annual vagrant. There is already yet another record under consideration.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 60, 6)

Cleveland Marske, juvenile, *P. d. dominica*, 14th to at least 19th October (D. J. & Miss S. Britton *et al.*).

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, *P. d. dominica*, 4th to 7th October (J. C. Pett, G. P. Sutton), presumed same, 17th (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, G. P. Sutton) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 15);

presumed another, age and race uncertain, 11th October (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, J. C. Pett, G. P. Sutton). Stithians Reservoir, adult, *P. d. dominica*, 23rd September to at least 12th October (Dr A. M. Hanby, S. C. Hutchings *et al.*). Hayle, probably adult, *P. d. dominica*, 2nd and 14th November and 5th December (W. R. Hirst, I. F. Tew, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, juvenile, *P. d. dominica*, 16th to 20th September (A. Brown, P. R. Gordon).

1978 Kent Grove Ferry, possibly first-year, 29th April to 2nd May (Dr R. E. C. Collins, D. C. Gilbert, W. G. Harvey).

1980 Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, adult, *P. d. dominica*, 11th October (R. Smaldon), possibly same as adult, 6th to 19th (*Brit. Birds* 74: 467).

(Arctic North America and northeast Asia) A good year, bettered only by the seven in each of 1971 and 1975. Lothian has rather remarkably now had five, but Cornwall and Scilly are well ahead.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 19, 0)

1977-78 Essex and Suffolk The Little Cornard, Middleton and Great Henny individual (*Brit. Birds* 73: 506) was present from 25th December 1977 to 21st January 1978.

(Southeast Russia and west-central Asia)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 25, 2)

1980 Devon Lundy, first-winter, 5th to 6th September (T. J. Davis, I. Smith).

(North America) Also an adult at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 31st May and a juvenile at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 15th August. The identification of the Lundy bird was greatly helped by close-range coloured photographs. The 1980 record total moves on to seven, two in Britain and five in Ireland.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 175, 17)

Cheshire Frodsham, 16th to at least 19th August (C. R. Linfoot *et al.*).

Hampshire Warsash, adult, 12th October (D. A. Christie).

Humberside Tophill Low Pumping Station, adult, 27th July to 1st August (P. Izzard, P. Dove, T. Richardson *et al.*).

Lancashire Freckleton, adult, 1st September (P. Guy).

Norfolk Breydon, adult, 19th July (P. R. Allard, A. D. Boote). Cley and Salthouse, adult, 22nd July to 30th August (D. J. Holman *et al.*). Holme, adult, 28th August to at least 4th September (R. L. K. Jolliffe *et al.*).

197. Juvenile White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Cleveland, October 1980
(P. Wheeler)



Northumberland Druridge, 19th September (J. C. Day, Mr & Mrs L. G. Macfarlane).

Shetland Virkie, adult, 25th to 30th August (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, adult, 1st to 15th August (M. J. W. Hay, C. R. Janman, O. Mitchell *et al.*).

1980 Cleveland Long Drag Pools, adult, 26th to 27th July (J. B. Dunnett). Dorman's Pool, 2nd to 21st October: three, two adults and one juvenile, from 5th to at least 15th (Dr G. Foggitt, G. Icton, D. T. Metcalfe *et al.*) (plate 197).

1980 Kent Dungeness, adult, 15th to 21st September, trapped 15th (N. J. Riddiford).

1980 Norfolk Snettisham, adult, 3rd August (D. M. Bryant). Cley, adults, 1st to 31st August, two, 1st to 12th (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington, J. E. Ward *et al.*). Cley and Salthouse, not aged, 30th October to 2nd November (A. & J. Parker *et al.*). Titchwell, adult, 11th to 12th October (R. H. Davis *et al.*).

(North America) Also seven in Ireland: an adult at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 12th July and a juvenile there from 23rd to 27th July; and singles at Ballisodore Bay, Co. Sligo, on 4th and 5th August; at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, from 10th to 14th August; at Bann Estuary, Co. Derry, on 6th and 7th September; at Duncrue Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, from 10th to 13th September; and at BP Refinery Reclamation Pools, Belfast, Co. Down, on 19th October. These additional birds take the 1980 total to a record 25. The party of three in Cleveland in 1980 is without precedent, but was matched in the same year by three Baird's Sandpipers at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford (*Brit. Birds* 74: 469).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 83, 4)

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, 22nd to 24th September (J. Holding, T. P. Robinson, R. Twigg *et al.*). Marazion, not aged, 28th September to 10th October (W. R. Hirst *et al.*).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 15th to 31st August (A. Grieve, D. Hursthouse, D. Page *et al.*).

Sussex, West Shoreham-by-Sea, adult, 18th to 19th August (C. J. Fox, A. R. Kitson, Dr J. A. Newnham *et al.*).

(North America and northeast Siberia) A late Irish record is of two at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 23rd to 25th September 1980, one remaining till 26th. These take the 1980 total to a record ten. Cornwall had but a single record of this species prior to 1980, but five during the past two years. One of these, at Marazion, rather oddly spent its time on a shingle beach.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 42, 0)

1980 Gloucestershire Aylburton Worth, 15th May (M. Smart).

1980 Norfolk Breydon, 27th to 30th May (P. R. Allard).

(North Eurasia) All recent records have concerned classic 'stripy dark jobs' and a review of some earlier records of birds closely resembling Dunlins *Calidris alpina* is overdue.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, 367, 15)

Cheshire Frodsham, 6th to 7th September (C. R. Linfoot *et al.*).

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, 14th September to 4th October (Dr F. K. Hammond, J. M. Randall, G. Sellors *et al.*).

Devon Dawlish Warren, 25th September (A. Myerscough, R. M. Normand, S. K. Welch *et al.*).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands and Alkborough Flats area, juvenile, 31st August to 6th October (G. P. Catley, A. Grieve, G. Sharp *et al.*).

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 13th to 14th October (G. J. A. Burton, R. K. Coles, D. R. Hodge).

Norfolk Cley, juvenile, 5th to 6th September (D. J. Holman, H. Shorrocks, D. G. Wright *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 18th to 22nd September (P. J. Heath, D. N. Mairs *et al.*).

Surrey Perry Oaks, juvenile, 12th to 25th September (R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon, P. Naylor *et al.*).

Western Isles Bornish, South Uist, three, 18th September (W. R. Brackenridge).

1974 Dorset Ferrybridge, at least 10th September (R. A. Barrett *et al.*).

1979 Kent See 1980 Kent below.

1980 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 18th to at least 20th September (C. R. Clarke, D. T. Metcalfe *et al.*).

1980 Dyfed Ynys-Hir, 28th September to 1st October (P. E. Davis, J. Miles, R. Squires *et al.*).

1980 Hampshire Keyhaven Marshes, 12th to 13th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 470), to at least 22nd (P. Combridge, P. M. Potts, E. J. Wiseman *et al.*).

1980 Kent Elmley, 7th October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 470), was actually in 1979.

1980 Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, at least 3rd September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 470); total now accepted at least eight: St Mary's, 3rd to 28th September, three, 5th to 28th, five from 8th, eight on 9th, five or six, 11th to 23rd, seven, 17th to 20th, four, 24th. St Agnes, 8th September, possibly joined St Mary's party. Tresco, 8th to 27th September, two, 8th to 24th, probably joined St Mary's party on 9th only (A. Amery, M. Langman, W. Wagstaffe *et al.*).

1980 Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, 9th to at least 14th September (B. Deer, C. Hall, Ms L. Palmer *et al.*).

1980 Western Isles Near Stornoway, Lewis, 14th to 18th September (Dr N. E. Buxton).

(North America) After the 19 in Ireland in 1980, there were only four there during 1981: three at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 5th to 22nd September, and one at Pilmore Strand, Co. Cork, on 13th. The 1980 total moves on to 48.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 46, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, 22nd September to 5th October, again 9th, trapped 23rd September (A. Broome, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (plate 198).

(Northeast Europe and northwest Asia) A well-watched bird.

198. First-year Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, September 1981 (John Hewitt)





199. Juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Cornwall, October 1981 (G. P. Gill)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 62, 5)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, juvenile, 8th October to at least 25th March 1982 (R. Butts, G. C. Hearl, S. C. Hutchings *et al.*) (plate 13). Crowdy Reservoir, 16th October (D. J. Britton). Marazion, juvenile, 18th October and 19th December (G. P. Gill *et al.*) (plate 199); see also Dowitcher.

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, juvenile, 3rd October to at least 13th May 1982 (M. C. & P. Combridge, I. R. Watts, S. West *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, juvenile, 7th to 16th October (S. C. Madge, C. Winn *et al.*).

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also, the two present at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 11th and 17th October 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 471) remained until April 1981. What were thought to have been the same birds reappeared on 16th July, staying into 1982. A poor year by recent standards, but several others remain under consideration.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* or *L. griseus* (31, 154, 6)

Cornwall Hayle, 2nd December (G. C. Hearl), possibly same as Marazion Long-billed.

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also one at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, from 20th to 26th April. The totals include those specifically identified.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 18, 0)

1979 Sussex, West Bracklesham, first-winter, 21st to 23rd December (*Brit. Birds* 73: 509), last seen 25th (R. F. Porter).

1980 Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 24th April (D. J. R. Counsell, W. Wright *et al.*).

(North America) The St Kilda bird, which was photographed, was the first spring record and the fourth ever for Scotland; the previous three were at Ruthwell, Dumfries, on 13th October 1933, and at Fair Isle on 5th October 1970 and on 25th September 1975.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 21, 3)

Cambridgeshire Near Guyhirn, 11th May (Dr J. Lines).

Kent Elmley, 10th May (M. Barnard, P. N. Collin *et al.*) (fig. 4).

Suffolk Minsmere, 14th to 23rd July (Z. Bhatia, F. K. Cobb, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

1978 Northumberland Cresswell Pond, 17th to 18th June (E. E. Wright).

1979 Norfolk Hickling, 6th September (S. E. Linsell, P. G. F. Steele). Cley, 14th to 18th August (*Brit. Birds* 73: 509), also 07.20 BST on 19th (G. R. & Mrs H. J. Welch).

1980 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 4th October (D. R. Atkinson, G. L. Gamage), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 74: 494), now accepted on further evidence.

(Southeast Europe and west and east Asia) The record total in 1979 moves on to six. This delicate 'mini shank' has graced our shores for the past six successive years and has become increasingly easy to twitch.

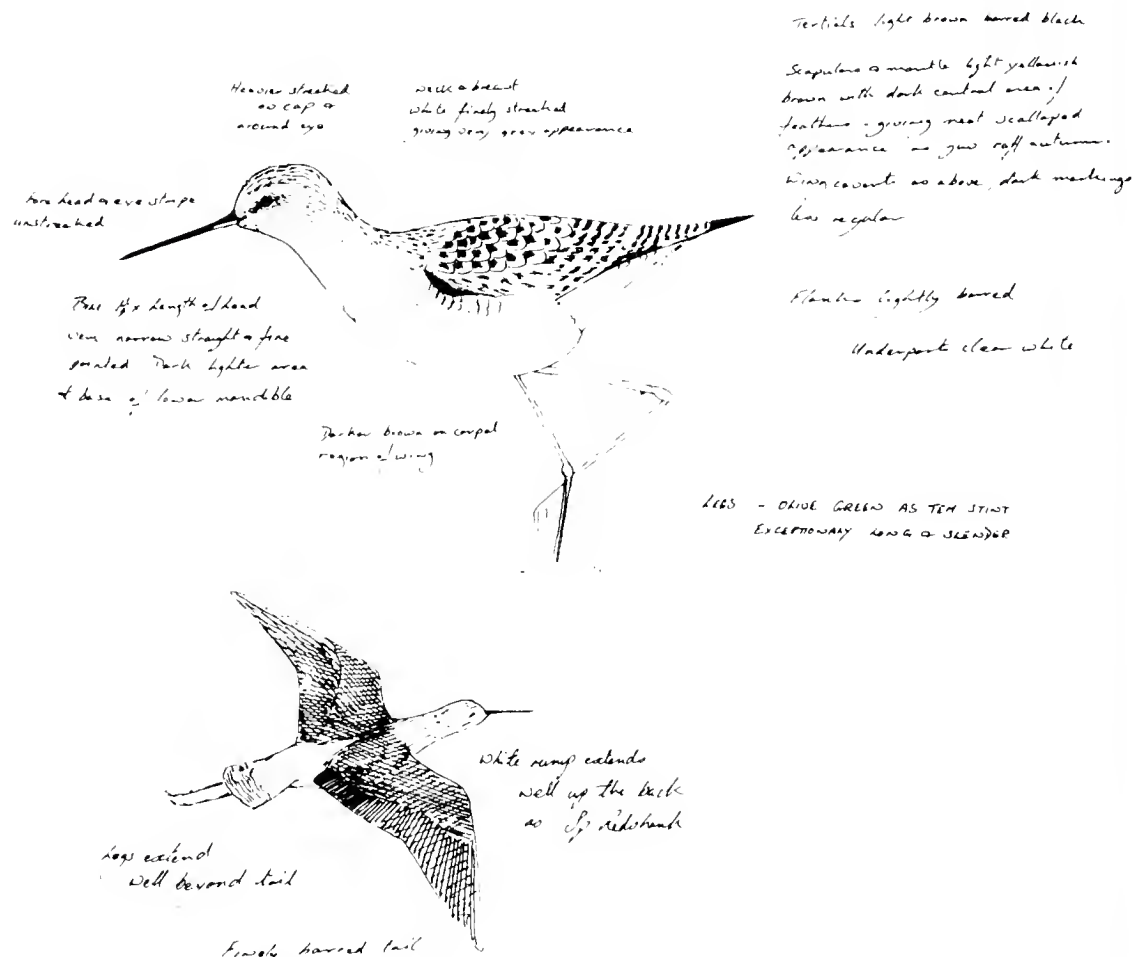


Fig. 4. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Kent, May 1981 (P. N. Collin)

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 116, 11)

Cornwall Wadebridge, juvenile, 26th September to 11th October (S. M. Christophers, Dr C. R. Ireland, D. B. Rosair *et al.*). Drift Reservoir, first-winter, 13th to 18th October (W. R. Hirst, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

Devon Aveton Gifford, first-winter, 28th November to at least early April 1982 (H. & Mrs J. M. Huggins *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor, 30th to 31st January and 11th February to 14th March (M. Cade *et al.*).

Gwent Peterstone Wentloog, juvenile, 25th September (S. N. H. Howell).

Kent Elmley, juvenile, 5th to 6th September (P. N. Collin *et al.*).

Northumberland Budle Bay, 12th July (J. A. Ginnever, T. Keuchel, S. P. Singleton *et al.*).

(North America) Also four in Ireland: at Bann Estuary, Co. Londonderry, from 24th August to early September; at Castle Espie, Co. Down, from 13th September to 8th December; at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, on 14th September; and at Kilkerran Lake, Co. Cork, from 4th October to 8th December. The record total of ten in 1970 is finally exceeded. Only two have previously been recorded throughout a British winter: in Northamptonshire from 26th September 1971 to 3rd May 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 66: 341) and in Devon from 10th November 1975 to 6th April 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 336).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 15, 1)

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 1st August (F. K. Cobb, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) There are two other records for August: at Scaling Dam Reservoir, Cleveland, on 4th August 1971 and at Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Dorset/Somerset, on 18th August 1974.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 47, 2)

Gwent See 1980 Gwent below.

Gwynedd Port Colhon, Llyn Peninsula, Caernarvon, adult, 29th September (T. G. Smith).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 27th August (G. P. Catley, A. Grieve, K. Rotherham).

1980 Gwent Peterstone Wentloog, first-winter, first seen 26th October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 472), remained to 25th April 1981.

(North America) The Gwent bird was the second to overwinter in Britain, not the first as stated in our last report (*Brit. Birds* 74: 472): one was at Weymouth, Dorset, from 8th or 9th December 1973 to 24th March 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 317).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 133, 10)

Cheshire Frodsham, juvenile, 27th September to at least 5th October (T. R. Cleaves, K. E. Hague, M. J. Spicer *et al.*).

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, 26th August to 5th September (S. Piotrowski *et al.*). Sennen, juvenile, 17th to 27th September (G. C. Hearl, S. C. Hutchings *et al.*) (plates 200 & 201). Bude, adult, 27th to 28th September (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, J. C. Pett, G. P. Sutton).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, 13th September (Dr L. L. J. Vick).

Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 15th to 23rd September, possibly same, St Mary's, briefly, 20th and 26th (Dr R. C. Brace, D. B. Hunt *et al.*).

1980 Cleveland Long Drag and Dorman's Pools, adult, 13th to at least 20th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 473), again 21st (T. Dixon *et al.*).

1980 Highland Loch of Mey, Caithness, adult ♂, 1st to 4th June (Dr D. M. & Mrs J. Edge, E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

1980 Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, 17th to 28th September (P. J. Dubois, D. J. Fisher, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

(North America) A late Irish record concerns an unprecedented trio at the BP Refinery Reclamation Pools, Belfast, Co. Down, on 8th September 1980; two of these were seen at nearby Duncrue Street, Belfast, on the same date, one remaining there until 13th. Also, four in Ireland in 1981: at Shannon Airport Lagoon, Co. Clare, from 18th to 20th August; at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, on 14th September; at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 24th September to 1st October; and another at Akeragh Lough from 28th to 30th October. Finally, one in the Channel Islands: at Pulias Pond, Guernsey.

from 25th to 28th September. One wonders what this distinctive wader was being identified as before the first British record in 1954: Lesser Yellowlegs perhaps?

The total numbers of Nearctic waders (excluding Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos*) in recent years have been 57 (of 12 species) in 1976, 136 (of ten species) in 1977, 81 (of 12 species) in 1978, 78 (of 13 species) in 1979, 138 (of 12 species) in 1980 and 74 (of ten species) in 1981. So, with the surfeit of late records in the present report, 1980 becomes perhaps the best year ever. It should be noted that, following Tony Pym's paper on Lesser Golden Plovers (*Brit. Birds* 75: 112-124), which showed that the vast majority are of the American race *dominica* rather than the Asiatic race *fulva*, we now include that species in this summary.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (not known, not known, —)

1977 Gwynedd Puffin Island, Anglesey, juvenile, 21st August (V. Hughes).

1978 Gwynedd Newborough Warren, Anglesey, juvenile, 13th October (A. Bennett, J. P. Wilkinson).

1979 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, adult, 27th July (P. R. Chambers, P. J. Dunn, A. M. Paterson).

(North Europe and west Siberia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but any unsubmitted records for 1976-79 are still required.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 26, 2)

Clwyd Colwyn Bay, Denbigh, first-winter, 27th to 28th December (G. Johnson, M. G. Pennington).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, first-winter, 30th December to 1982 (J. C. Nicholls *et al.*).

1980 Somerset Bossington, adult, 8th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 474), again 10th, and in Porlock area, 14th; considered to be second-winter individual (M. Cade, Dr G. P. Green *et al.*).

(North America and Caribbean) It is just possible that these two records relate to the same individual. A poor year by recent standards.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 6, 1)

Highland Isle of Canna, Inner Hebrides, second-summer, 5th to 10th July, found moribund 11th, now at Royal Scottish Museum (R. L. Swann *et al.*).

(North America) It still seems curious that this gull of the North American Mid West should occur so regularly in Europe. Norway had its third individual in December 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 24, 3)

Cornwall Mount's Bay, first-year, 16th March, and Penzance, Newlyn, Hayle area to 28th (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor and Radipole area, first-year, 2nd to 7th April and 22nd May to at least 8th June (M. Cade *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plates 162 & 163). Hengistbury Head (formerly Hampshire), first-year, 20th April (M. Andrews, C. R. Chapleo, P. Morrison). Both probably same as Cornish individual.

1980 Cornwall Falmouth, first-winter, 17th November (*Brit. Birds* 74: 475), also early on 18th (per D. J. Barker).

1980 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, first-summer/second-winter, 15th July (P. M. & W. A. Potts), again 23rd (W. E. Oddie).

(North America) Also a first-year at Ramore Head, Co. Antrim, on 13th March and a first-summer at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 18th July to 8th August: the third and fourth Irish records. The second Irish record, at Bangor, Co. Down, from 26th July to 2nd September and on 31st



200 & 201. Juvenile Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, moulting to first-winter plumage, Cornwall, September 1981 (S. C. Hutchings)



December 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 512), remained till 21st January 1980. The status of this species remains peculiarly unaffected by the growth in gull-watching.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 38, 26)

Shetland Lerwick, second-winter, 29th December to at least January 1982 (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

1980 Dorset Radipole, first-winter, 5th November to 8th December when found dead on road, remains retained by M. Cade (M. Cade *et al.*) (plate 202).

(North America) Also 25 in Ireland: second-summer at Sandymount Strand, Co. Dublin, from 3rd to 7th May; first-summer at Killougher, Co. Wicklow, on 11th and 12th May; first-summer at Sandymount Strand from 23rd May till April 1982 (when second-summer); five first-summers and two second-summers at The Mullet, Co. Mayo, on 30th May and 1st June, three of the first-summers remaining till 3rd August; first-summer at Lettermacaward, Co. Donegal, on 20th June; eight different second-summers at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, between 5th July and 11th October; second-summer at Bann Estuary, Co. Londonderry, from 12th July through August; adult and second-summer at Roe Estuary, Co. Londonderry, on 30th July and another second-summer there on 6th August; second-winter at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 20th September; and finally an adult at Donegal, Co. Donegal, on 14th November. The Committee was inundated with records of this former great rarity, not recorded here until 1973, and a further 37 records remain under consideration. The full picture will be published in our next report, and we already hear of multiple occurrences at new localities during 1982.



202. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Dorset, November 1980 (Peter J. Hopkin)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 23, 4)

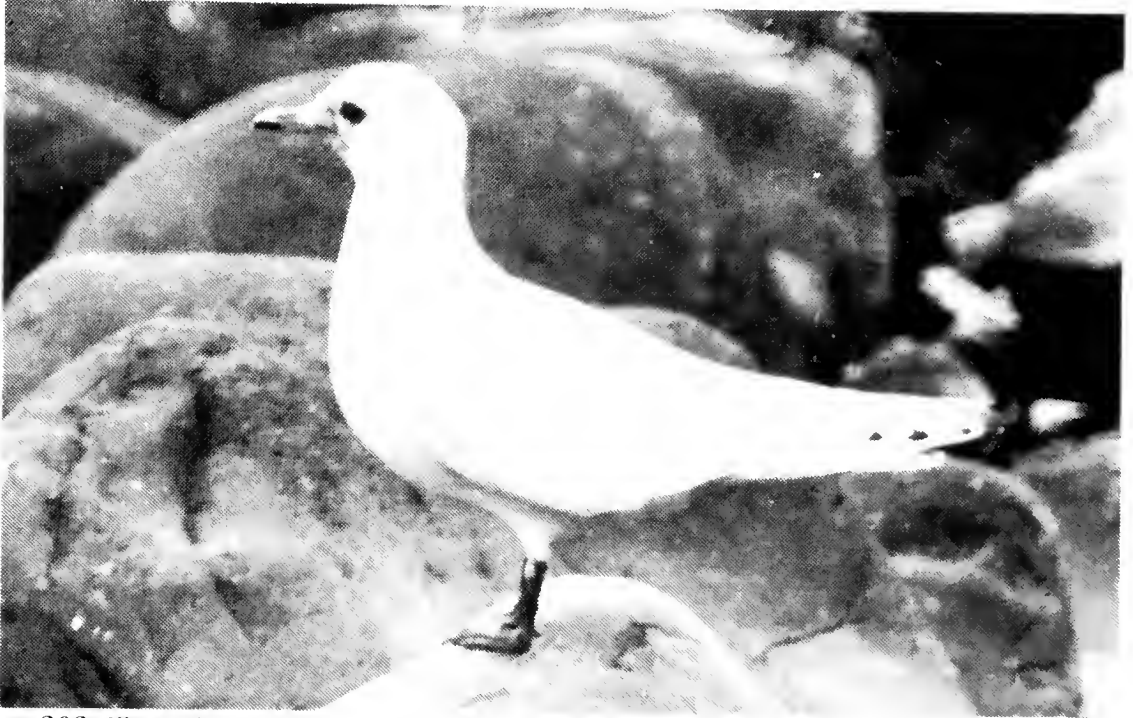
Dyfed Fishguard Harbour, adult, 15th to 16th February (J. W. Donovan, R. Price *et al.*).

Shetland Whalsay, adult, 14th January (Dr B. Marshall, N. D. Poleson, W. Simpson).
Scalloway, adult, 24th January to 5th February (J. D. Okill, I. Sandison *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia, Greenland and Canada) Also one at Portavogie, Co. Down, on 22nd and 23rd February. A good year, outshone only by the five in 1976. It is nice to see this Arctic stray recorded where we would most expect it, in midwinter Shetland.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 24, 0)

1980 Shetland Sumburgh, first-winter, 13th to at least 19th November (D. Coutts, L. Dalziel, W. Horne *et al.*) (plate 203). Gremister, Yell, adult, 7th to 10th December (M. Heubeck, D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 204).



203. First-winter Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Shetland, November 1980 (Dennis Coutts)

204. Adult Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Shetland, December 1980 (colour print: R. J. Tulloch)



(High Arctic) The first blank year since 1975 follows the five in 1980, a record year for recent decades.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (53, 153, 1)

Sussex, East Rye, 19th May (P. F. Bonham, Mrs P. Haddon, R. C. Knight).

1980 Kent Dungeness, 28th July (M. W. Lankester).

1980 Norfolk Titchwell, 7th to 26th July (J. B. Kemp, J. Miller *et al.*).

1980 Suffolk Walberswick, 5th May (M. C. Marsh, P. W. Murphy).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark) The Titchwell bird made rather a nuisance of itself by robbing Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* and Common Terns *S. hirundo* both of eggs and of chicks.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 113, 6)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 5th July (C. A. Carson, D. M. Elliot, D. Weaver *et al.*).

Essex Heybridge Gravel-pits, 20th to 22nd June (G. C. Bond, G. R. Ekins, N. Green *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 237), also seen in Suffolk.

Humberside Messingham, 14th June (B. M. Clarkson, M. J. Tarrant), presumed same. South Ferriby, 15th to 16th (G. P. Catley, J. T. Harrison, D. Suddaby).

Kent Stodmarsh, 6th August (E. Barnes).

Lothian Hound Point, 3rd July (A. Stewart).

Strathclyde Off Ardpatrik Point, Argyll, 6th June (D. L. & Mrs R. Z. Clugston).

Suffolk Minsmere, 18th and 22nd to 28th June, 1st and 6th to 13th July (G. J. Jobson, J. Sorensen *et al.*), same as Essex individual. Dunwich, 24th June (B. A. Combes, R. Murray), also possibly same.

At sea English Channel, 10km off Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, 28th July (M. P. Hall).

1967 Cheshire Witton Flashes, Great Budworth and Marbury area, 2nd to 4th July (A. J. Murphy *et al.*).

1980 Gwynedd Cemlyn, Anglesey, 26th May (K. G. Croft).

(Cosmopolitan except South America, but everywhere local) An excellent year for catching up on this species. Those who missed the obliging Humberside bird quickly recovered composure in Suffolk or Essex. Perhaps it was the same bird?

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* (1, 4, 0)

1979 Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, first-winter, 24th November (S. J. Moon). A part-read ring indicated it had been ringed as a nestling at one of six localities between Metomkin Island, Virginia, and Cape Lookout Channel, North Carolina, USA (J. Buckelew per J. S. Weske).

(West Africa, North America and the Caribbean) A full account of this fascinating occurrence will be published shortly.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 386, 15)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, juvenile, 13th August (T. R. Cleaves, J. B. O. Rossetti).

Cambridgeshire Near Upware, 29th May (A. Undrill *et al.*). Grafham Water, Huntingdonshire, juvenile, 12th September (R. F. Porter *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, juvenile, 13th to 14th August (C. Murphy, R. Harrison, M. Wotham).

Cornwall Marazion, 20th May (B. Pattenden *et al.*).

Devon Slapton Ley, juvenile, 11th to 14th September (R. M. Behringer, G. E. S., J. C. E. & Dr M. M. Turner).

Humberside Hornsea Mere, juvenile, 8th August (I. Forsyth, K. Rotherham).

Kent Stodmarsh, adult, 29th June (Mrs B. Ansan, D. Feast, P. J. & Mrs M. Mountford). Cliffe, juvenile, 6th to 8th August (T. E. Bowley, D. W. Taylor *et al.*), same, Elmley, 8th to 10th (P. N. Collin *et al.*). Dungeness, juvenile, 21st to 26th August (T. E. Bowley, J. R. H. Clements, D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

Kent/Sussex, East Bewl Bridge Reservoir, 3rd May (A. Lloyd).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 27th July (N. Bostock, D. J. Holman, J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Somerset Parrett Estuary, adult, 2nd October (B. Rabbitts).

Sussex, East Rye, adult, 15th June, presumed same, 20th to 21st (M. L. & Mrs L. M. Champion, R. C. Knight, W. B. Marrison *et al.*). See also Kent/Sussex, East, above.

Warwickshire Kingsbury Water Park, adult, 27th June (B. L. Kington *et al.*).

1979 Clwyd Shotwick Reservoir, juvenile, 10th to 13th October (B. S. Barnacal, M. I. Eldridge, J. G. Jones).

1979 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, adult, 2nd August (N. M. Bibby, P. R. Chambers, D. Waudby).

1980 Avon Chew Valley Lake, juvenile, 24th August (A. Whatley).

1980 Berkshire Theale, juvenile, 7th September (T. A. Guyatt).

1980 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, juvenile, 17th August (G. Icceton).

1980 Dorset Portland, adult, 31st August (G. L. & M. G. Webber).

1980 Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, juvenile, 27th to 28th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 477), first seen 26th (per J. D. Sanders).

1980 Suffolk Minsmere, 19th May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 477), also 20th (per D. R. Moore).

(Southeast Europe, west and east Asia) None in Ireland during 1981, but one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 10th July 1980. An uneventful year.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (3, 11, 2)

Grampian Johnshaven Beach, Kincardine, dead, 25th January, now at Dundee Museum (K. Brockie).

Orkney Bay of Ireland, freshly dead, 29th December (M. Gray *et al.*), skin retained by E. R. Meek.

1980 At sea Norwegian Sea, Brent Oilfield, 61° 03' N 01° 43' E, 26th December (Dr G. Aitken, T. J. Hagan, P. Hope Jones).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Following six years with none at all, this difficult species has been detected during six successive years. The Brent Oilfield record is excluded from the totals.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 17, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 23rd to 24th September (D. S. Flumm, D. G. H. Mills *et al.*).

1980 Cornwall Penzance, found moribund, 9th October, now at Bolton Museum (B. King).

(North America) The sixth for Scilly and the earliest ever, by a day: there was one at Portland, Dorset, from 24th to 28th September 1979.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 183, 6)

Orkney Papa Westray, first-year ♀, 21st May (S. Davies). North Ronaldsay, adult ♀, 27th May (J. & R. McCutcheon, Dr K. F. Woodbridge); first-year ♂, 2nd to 4th June (J. W. A. Cuth, Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

Shetland Fetlar, all adult ♀♀: two since 1980 and throughout year, three early April to end May and at least 15th June, 17th July and 31st August, four at least 13th April (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Unst, adult ♀, frequently June to August, from Fetlar (J. N. Dymond, G. & J. D. Okill *et al.*). Ronas Hill, Mainland, ♀, 11th July (G. & J. D. Okill, I. S. Robertson).

1980 Shetland Yell, ♀, 19th May (R. J. Tulloch).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Orkney records are encouraging, in particular the young male.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (3, 5, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 12th to 14th October (P. S. Campbell, K. Dummigan, A. Graham, K. Hiller *et al.*).

(North America) The roar of approval from the assembled crowd, when this ace flyer obligingly reappeared on the second evening, may have

reminded some more of a football match than of birding; but the bird did not mind.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 157, 12)

Dorset Portland, 11th to 12th September (M. & Mrs W. Rogers *et al.*), also at Durlston on 12th (R. H. J. Murray, B. J. Widden).

Glamorgan, South Llantwit Major, 25th June (I. Malin, Dr D. J. Thomas).

Grampian Banchory and Devenick area, 4th to 7th June (L. Calle, B. J. Stewart, R. van Meurs).

Kent Hayesden Water, 25th to 26th July (G. J. A. Burton *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley and Sheringham area, 29th to 30th May (R. M. Catchpole, E. T. Myers, J. E. Ward *et al.*), Gorleston-on-Sea, 10th June (B. A. Combes).



205. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Scilly, May 1981 (colour print: Alan Stout)

Scilly St Martin's, 31st May (R. D. & Mrs Penhallurick, A. & Mrs Stout) (plate 205).

Shetland Fair Isle, 18th April (J. M. S. Arnott, N. J. Riddiford); 4th to 10th June (B. Wyss *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 8th May (M. J. Helps), probably same, Telscombe Cliffs, 9th (M. J. Helps, S. C. Johnstone, A. R. Kitson). Beachy Head, 25th May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

1979 Humberside Messingham, 16th June (D. Suddaby).

1979 Lothian Edinburgh, ♀, found dead, 25th June, now at Royal Scottish Museum (Mrs B. K. Witts per G. F. Bell & I. H. J. Lyster).

1980 Humberside Hornsea Mere, 2nd September (R. G. Hawley).

1980 Wight Ventnor, 8th April (P. J. Barden).

1980 Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 6th September (J. & Mrs Wozencroft).

(South Eurasia, northwest and east Africa) Also one at Torr Head, Co. Antrim, on 7th June; and two in the Channel Islands: at Castel, Guernsey, on 26th and 27th September and 3rd October, and at L'Etacq, Jersey, on 18th October. A good total, exceeded in recent years only by the 14 in 1970.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 2, 2)

Cornwall Skewjack, 16th May (E. Griffiths, W. R. Hirst, H. P. K. Robinson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plates 189 & 190).

Dyfed Skokholm, 31st May to 1st June (M. de L. Brook, P. Conder, E. G. & Mrs L. Gynn).

(Africa, Middle East and south Asia) Perhaps the same bird, but the chances of one individual swift being relocated are slight: it is perhaps more likely that a small influx occurred with only two being detected.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 113, 19)**Cleveland** Cowpen Marsh, 21st May (B. Moore, P. Samson).**Cornwall** Goldstithney, near Marazion, five, 30th, six 31st May (E. Griffiths *et al.*).**Cumbria** Sizergh Castle, Kendal, four, 8th June (A. F. Gould, M. Hutcheson, A. Michelini).**Gwent** Caldicott, 6th June (B. Smallcombe & family).**Hampshire** Warsash, 29th August (D. A. & Mrs C. Christie).**Strathclyde** Knocklearoch Farm, Islay, two, 3rd June (S. T. Robinson).**Sussex, East** Winchelsea Beach, 25th May (R. D. & Mrs S. Cumming & family). Beachy Head, 26th May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).**Yorkshire, North** Near Thornaby, 23rd May (G. Smith).**Yorkshire, West** Parlington, three, 10th June (R. Spencer).**1980 Tyne & Wear** Earsdon, 6th June (J. E. Ferguson, I. D. Moorehouse).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa) The North Yorkshire bird is taken to be that which flew south in Cleveland two days earlier. There may be more duplication here: suppose the Cornwall birds headed north and split into parties of four and two? Assuming that this is not the case, this welcome influx approaches the record total of 20 in 1973, which also included a flock in Cornwall (*Brit. Birds* 67: 329).

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 64, 2)**Scilly** St Agnes, 20th May to 9th June (D. J. Barker, F. H. D. Hicks, E. D. Hill *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, juvenile, 22nd September, later found dead, skin now in Observatory collection (L. J. Degnan, J. F. Holloway, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(South and east Europe, west Asia and northwest Africa) Gaudy but nice, and still far too rare. There have been only two in each of the past four years.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 187, 11)**Devon** Lundy, 28th May (H., M. & S. Davies).**Norfolk** Holme, 23rd October (R. L. K. Jolliffe).**Scilly** St Agnes, 23rd May (D. J. Barker *et al.*). St Mary's, 6th to at least 25th October (A. Roberts, P. Wordsworth *et al.*); 10th to at least 29th October (P. J. Basterfield *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, five: 19th to 26th September (D. S. Farrow, C. Robson, J. M. Warne *et al.*); 25th to 26th September (J. M. Turton *et al.*); 1st October (P. K. Greaves, D. Page *et al.*); 6th October (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 10th to 11th October (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Fetlar, 23rd to 28th September (J. N. Dymond).

(South Eurasia, north and east Africa) Another average showing, matching the previous year's total.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 69, 1)**Hertfordshire** Tring Reservoirs, 17th May (G. Brandeys).**1979 Dorset** Corfe Mullen, 27th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 481), withdrawn by observer.**1980 Merseyside** Red Rocks, 3rd May (Miss J. E. Moore).**1980 Norfolk** Cley, 17th May (R. M. Belringer, J. C. Nicholls).**1980 Scilly** Bryher and St Mary's, 16th May (D. B. Hunt, A. Vittery).

(South and east Eurasia, and Africa) The Committee always welcomes withdrawals of previously accepted records when the observer is no longer confident of the identification. We know of a number of other records where there is some soul-searching in progress.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (135, 939, 36)**Cumbria** South Walney, see 1980 Cumbria.**Gwynedd** Bardsey, 22nd October (P. J. Roberts).

Hampshire Near Aldershot, 31st October to 4th November (J. M. Clark, K. B. Wills *et al.*).

Humberside Hornsea Mere, 26th October (D. & S. Bryan, R. G. Hawley). Spurn, 27th to 28th October (B. Banson, B. R. Spence, I. D. Walker *et al.*).

Lincolnshire North Coates Point, 13th September (R. Lorand). Donna Nook, 6th October (R. Lorand). Saltfleetby, 18th October (H. Bunn, G. P. Catley, D. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Salthouse, 26th to 27th September (S. J. M. Gantlett, K. Harrison, R. G. Millington *et al.*); another, 12th to 31st October, two, at least 18th to 21st (J. B. Kemp *et al.*); presumed another, 8th November (I. K. Dawson, D. J. Fisher, P. Fraser). Sheringham, 6th October (Dr M. P. Taylor). Winterton, 23rd October (G. Allport, P. V. Hayman, P. J. Heath *et al.*); four, 25th, three, 1st November (P. R. Allard *et al.*). Holme, 12th to 31st October (M. R. Coates, R. L. K. Jolliffe *et al.*).

Orkney Dcrrness, Mainland, 12th September (R. H. Dennis, E. R. Meek).

Scilly St Mary's, 18th to at least 26th October (M. J. Orchard, P. J. Sharp, C. W. Stone *et al.*); another, 22nd to at least 30th (R. J. Fairbank, D. G. H. Mills *et al.*). Tresco, 10th November (T. Baker, J. McLoughlin).

Shetland Fair Isle, six: 16th to 25th September (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 21st to 28th September (J. Hewitt, D. Page, J. M. Turton *et al.*); another, 28th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 5th to 6th October, two 6th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 25th October to 1st November (J. F. Holloway, C. D. Rowley *et al.*). Sumburgh, 15th to 16th September (J. D. Okill, I. Sandison). Bressay, 22nd September (M. S. Chapman). Sumburgh, 4th October (M. S. Chapman). Virkie, 5th to 6th October (M. S. Chapman). Spiggie, 15th October (J. D. Okill). Out Skerries, 21st September; another, 22nd to 26th October (D. M. Pullan, E. Tait).

Somerset Wet Moor, 8th March (D. J. Chown, M. A. Hallctt). Cheddar Reservoir, 12th December (B. Rabbitts).

1979 Norfolk Sheringham, 2nd October (K. Bailey, M. Fiszer, Dr M. P. Taylor).

1980 Cumbria South Walney, 20th December (possibly since 30th November) to 13th January 1981 (T. Dean, R. Wimpres *et al.*).

1980 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 19th October (M. I. Eldridge).

1980 Norfolk Titchwell, 27th to 28th September (S. C. Joyner, A. Palmer, N. Williams). Winterton, 9th November (P. R. Allard, A. D. Boote, T. E. Boulton).

1980 Scilly Bryher, 20th September (A. E. Girling, S. J. Woolfall).

1980 Shetland Out Skerries, 23rd October (E. Tait). Fair Isle, 28th October to 8th November (I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Bressay, 29th to 30th October (M. S. Chapman).

1980 Somerset Minehead, 11th to 28th March (M. P. Lee). Brean Down, 25th November (B. Rabbitts).

(West Siberia east to Mongolia and southeast to New Zealand, also Africa) The four winter records in Somerset and the one in Cumbria are noteworthy. There are many previous instances of wintering, mainly in the milder west and southwest of England, but it has occasionally been found in midwinter even on the English east coast, for example at Halstow Marshes, Kent, on 3rd January 1961 and at Cley, Norfolk, from 21st December 1979 to 11th January 1980. This robust pipit is more regular in winter than is generally supposed.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, 463, 19)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 5th September (N. Alford, Miss M. Hall, H. P. K. Robinson).

Devon Prawle Point, 14th May (J. C. Nicholls).

Dorset Portland, 2nd September (M. Cade, G. Walbridge *et al.*); another, 7th (M. Rogers, D. N. Walker).

Essex Colne Point, 12th September (Dr S. Cox, P. Loud, P. R. Newton *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, 26th to 28th September (G. P. Catley, J. Cudworth, D. A. Robinson *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 13th September (P. J. Grant *et al.*); three, juveniles, trapped, 27th, released 28th (D. Buffery, S. W. Gale, R. E. Turley *et al.*). Sandwich Bay, 19th September (D. M. Batchelor).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 13th May (H. Nicholls).

Scilly St Mary's, 26th September to 3rd October (M. J. Palmer *et al.*); another, 30th September to 10th October, possibly same, 14th (R. P. Bowman, D. C. Lee *et al.*).

Sussex, East Roedean, 6th September (N. A. G. Lord). Pett Level, 12th September (P. J. Grant, P. V. Hayman *et al.*). Beachy Head, 26th September (P. J. Andrews, M. Seagar-Smith).

Sussex, West Selsey Bill, 31st August (B. A. E. Marr). Church Norton, 3rd to 4th October (J. Austin, A. C. Manley, M. Taylor *et al.*).

1979 Tyne & Wear Marsden, 21st May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 482), published as accepted in error and should now be deleted.

1980 Sussex, West Littlehampton, 3rd September (R. Grimmett).

(Europe, south Asia and northwest Africa) Also, on the Channel Islands, there was one at Grouville, Jersey, on 11th September, and three on 12th. Another below-average year.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 17, 5)

Humberside Spurn, 24th October to 1st November (S. M. Lister, B. R. Spence *et al.*) (plate 206).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 25th October (J. B. Kemp, E. T. Myers *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 21st October to 4th November (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, T. A. Guyatt, A. Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 4th to 5th October (J. C. Gregory, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); another, 11th to 12th (J. N. Dymond, J. F. Holloway *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia to central and east Asia) A record year for this confiding pipit. Fair Isle has now had eight, but Scilly is close behind with seven.



206. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Humberside, October 1981 (Keith Atkin)

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 116, 4)

Leicestershire Rutland Water, 9th May (D. Blakesley, R. Davis, P. Powell).

Lothian Musselburgh, 15th September (A. D. Inglis, Dr L. L. J. Vick).

Norfolk Salthouse, 13th to 14th May (P. Bagguley, M. Cocker, R. Grimmett *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 16th October (M. J. Billington, P. A. Gluth, C. J. Hall *et al.*).

1979 Avon Chew Valley Lake, 16th December (A. J. Merritt, N. A. & Mrs L. A. Tucker).

1980 Norfolk Breydon, 1st June (P. R. Allard, A. D. Boote, G. E. Dunmore).

(Arctic Eurasia) The first midwinter record, though one was noted at Portland Bill, Dorset, on 13th November 1961.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 27, 2)

Lothian Aberlady Bay, immature, 14th to 16th September (A. Brown, P. M. Ellis, P. R. Gordon *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, immature, 25th to 26th September (D. S. Flumm, T. Gravett, N. A. G. Lord *et al.*).

1977 Shetland Fair Isle, immature, 16th to 24th September (R. A. Broad, C. T. Byers, R. Filby *et al.*).

1979 Shetland Fair Isle, immature, 2nd to 4th October (I. S. Robertson, W. Russell, H. G. Sandberg *et al.*).

1980 Shetland Sumburgh, immature, 17th September (I. G. Davison).

(Northeast and east Russia, west Siberia and west and central Asia) A useful identification paper on this species, by Lars Svensson, was published in 1977 (*Vår Fågelvärld* 36: 48-52), in Swedish with an English summary. This and some recent meticulous descriptions of British occurrences have greatly increased the Committee's awareness of the characters of this enigmatic species. We are actively considering a number of past reports, including the multi-observer record at St Agnes, Scilly, on 12th October 1978.

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* (6, 5, 0)

1980 Devon Prawle Point, 9th August (J. C. Nicholls).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and north Africa) There was one at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 20th April 1968, but all other previous records occurred during September and October. Interestingly, three were in South Devon, within 10km of Prawle Point: at Start on 25th September 1859, at Slapton on 12th October 1876 and near Prawle Point on 20th October 1959.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 39, 4)

Devon Lundy, first-winter, trapped, 24th September (J. Arnold, J. M. B. King, C. Matthews *et al.*).

Grampian Newburgh, found dead, 12th May, now at University of Aberdeen (Dr C. H. Fry per Dr A. G. Knox).

Highland Noss Farm, Wick, Caithness, trapped, 11th May (K. W. Banks, E. W. E. & H. Maughan *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Near Wallsend, freshly dead on road, 28th August, skin retained by G. F. Miller (G. F. Miller *et al.*).

(Scandinavia, east Europe and west Asia) The first record for southwest England occurred as recently as 1979—one at St Mary's, Scilly, from 28th September to at least 2nd October—so the one on Lundy is worthy of note.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 5, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, probably ♂, 29th to 30th September, trapped 29th (P. Milburn, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (plate 207).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan) Apart from a male on Fetlar, Shetland, on 31st May and 1st June 1971, all occurrences of this shy beauty of the northern taiga have been during September and October. This is the first for Fair Isle.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 49, 6)

Individuals showing characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri*, colloquially known as 'Siberian Stonechats', were recorded as follows:

Northumberland Low Hauxley, ♀ or immature, 24th to 25th October (M. Davison, B. Galloway), Druridge Bay, ♀, 9th December (Dr M. P. Eccles).

Orkney Birsay, ♀ or immature, 21st October (E. R. Meek).

Shetland Sumburgh, ♂, 24th September (M. S. Chapman). Fair Isle, ♀ or immature, 10th October (M. C. Carr, S. C. Johnstone, A. R. Kitson *et al.*). Fetlar, ♀ or immature, 19th to 20th October (J. N. Dymond).

1972 Norfolk Cley, ♂, 6th May (*Brit. Birds* 73: 519), now regarded as 'showing characters closer to *S. t. stejnegeri* than to *maura*'.

1979 Northumberland Holy Island, ♀ or immature, 6th to 7th October (M. J. Crosby, A. J. Merritt).

1980 Fife Isle of May, ♀ or immature, 12th October (I. P. Gibson).

1980 Lincolnshire Donna Nook, ♀ or immature, 9th November (G. P. Catley).

1980 Northumberland Near Blythe, ♀ or immature, 19th October (M. S. Hodgson).

(East from northeast Russia) There have been two late November records on the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire (*Brit. Birds* 74: 483), but the one here in Northumberland is the first for December.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 19, 1)

Shetland Out Skerries, 22nd to 26th September (D. Combs, D. M. Prillan, E. Tait *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, northwest Africa and southwest Asia, also Iran) The most familiar of our rare wheatears in Europe, but it gets no commoner here.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (6, 7, 1)

Dyfed Ynyslas, Cardiganshire, ♂, 21st June (A. D. Fox).

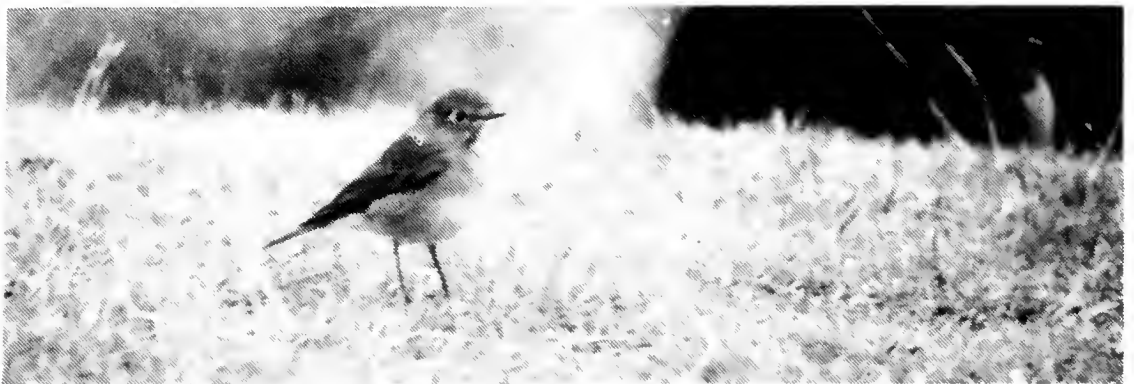
(Central and southern Eurasia) Eight have occurred in May, four in June and singles in October and November. This is the first record for Wales of this mountain-dweller.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 4, 1)

Grampian Newburgh, 27th May (A. Anderson, M. V. Bell, Dr A. G. Knox).

(Siberia and eastern Asia to Japan) A nice addition to his garden list for one of the observers. Three of the previous records were in October and one in December.

207. First-year Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, probably male, Shetland, September 1981 (colour print: Peter J. Milburn)



Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 7, 1)

Shetland Rova Head, first-winter, *T. r. atrogularis*, 7th December (D. Coutts, M. Heubeck *et al.*).

(Central Asia) The fifth for Shetland.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 2, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped, 21st September (P. K. Greaves, N. J. Riddiford, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

(Western Siberia and central Asia to Japan) This elusive warbler arrives with some precision: four have been on Fair Isle and all six have been between 13th September and 8th October. The numbers are offered with apologies to lovers of good humour.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 3, 3)

Humberside Spurn, first-year, trapped, 24th August (B. Banson, M. V. Sneary, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Norfolk Roydon, in song, 29th May to 6th June (P. Pratley, R. E. Jones, J. B. Kemp *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 188).

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd to 24th May, found dead 25th, skin now at Royal Scottish Museum (P. Alker, N. J. Riddiford, C. D. Rowley *et al.*).

(Central and east Europe and west central Asia) An extraordinary year, for all previous records had been in September: on Fair Isle on 24th and 25th September 1961, and on 16th September 1969; and on Bardsey, Caernarvonshire (now Gwynedd), on 17th September 1969. The Roydon bird sang its heart out for the delighted hundreds who were fortunate enough to experience this unique event.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 326, 34)

Dorset Portland, ♂, 21st to 23rd April, trapped 21st and 23rd (M. & Mrs W. Rogers, G. Walbridge, D. Walker *et al.*). Radipole, ♂, 30th April to 2nd May (M. Cade *et al.*).

Essex Pitsea Marsh, trapped, 26th May; trapped, 31st July (D. Culham, K. Osborn, V. S. Wiseman).

Hampshire Locality withheld, pair, 13th April to at least 16th June, probably bred (per D. F. Billett).

Hertfordshire Cheshunt, ♂, 20th to 21st May (D. W. Clayden, J. & Mrs M. J. Fitzpatrick, M. Oakland).

Kent Stodmarsh and Middle Stour area, 29th March to 4th August, four occupied territories, three pairs, two bred successfully (W. G. Harvey, A. C. B. Henderson, P. J. Mountford).

Norfolk Locality A, from 12th April, two pairs bred, one additional ♂. Locality B, ♂ in song during June (per M. J. Seago).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer, trapped, 24th June (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Suffolk Locality A, two ♂♂ singing 15th April to 27th June, sporadic records to 25th August. Locality B, ♂ from 22nd April, one pair bred (per D. R. Moore).

1978 Cheshire Frodsham, ♂, 9th to 10th May (Miss A. Quirk, E. Richards, J. Robinson *et al.*).

1980 Dorset Lodmoor, trapped, 9th June (T. Squire *et al.*).

1980 Norfolk Cley, ♂, 16th April to 9th May (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*). Locality A, from 11th April, four to six ♂♂ by May, further two ♂♂ in June. Locality B, two ♂♂ during breeding season. Locality C, four ♂♂ during breeding season. Locality D, one pair probably bred (per M. J. Seago).

1980 Suffolk Locality A, pair present during breeding season. Locality B, pair present during breeding season. Locality C, ♂, 25th April to at least 5th May, pair may have bred (per D. R. Moore).

(Europe, west and central Asia and northwest Africa) The only previous Scottish record was of two on Fair Isle on 14th May 1908.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (47, 527, 17)

Cornwall Marazion, 24th to 25th and 28th August (D. R. Moore *et al.*); presumed another, 27th September (B. Pattenden).

Dorset Lodmoor, 5th August (M. Cade); two, 7th September (R. A. Ford); presumed another, 13th September (P. Akers, M. A. Hallett, A. D. Whatley *et al.*); presumed another, 20th to 26th (P. Akers, C. I. Bushell, M. A. Hallett *et al.*); Portland, 9th August (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, M. A. Hallett *et al.*).

Essex Rainham, 12th August (N. D. Iungius).

Humberside Spurn, 8th to 9th August, two 8th, one trapped 9th (G. J. Hodgson, G. J. Speight, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 6th August (P. N. Collin, M. Wheeler *et al.*); Cliffe, 16th September (B. Chambers).

Scilly St Mary's, 12th October (N. R. Davies, C. Goodfellow).

Somerset Steart, juvenile, trapped, 30th August (A. W. Evans).

Sussex, West Climping, 10th August (O. Mitchell); Chichester Harbour, 12th September (P. Clement).

1980 Cornwall Marazion, juveniles, two, 15th September, one 19th (G. P. Catley), possibly same as those already published (*Brit. Birds* 74: 485).

1980 Dorset Lodmoor, four juveniles, trapped: 20th August (T. Squire *et al.*); 24th; 25th (A. J. Martin, T. Squire, P. J. Tullett); 26th (A. J. Martin, P. J. Tullett). Radipole, 26th September (*Brit. Birds* 74: 485), was at Lodmoor, not as stated.

1980 Hampshire Lower Test Marshes, 16th August (B. Dudley, E. S. Lawrence).

(East Europe and Urals) Also one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 3rd September and six on the Channel Islands: one on Jersey on 13th August and immatures trapped on Guernsey on 9th, 18th, 19th and 22nd August and on 3rd September. Another poor year, but an unusually high proportion during very early August.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 3, 2)

Hertfordshire Tring Reservoirs, 9th November (C. E. Tack) (plate 208).

Tyne & Wear Priors Park, trapped, 27th September (A. Belshaw, Miss M. Carruthers, K. G. Dures) (plate 209).

(South Russia and Asia) The previous records fell between 16th September and 15th October, so, as well as being the first inland record, the Tring bird is easily the latest. It came to light when coloured photographs were taken to the nearby BTO headquarters and later shown to incredulous rarity men at the annual BTO conference.

208. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*. Hertfordshire, November 1981 (C. E. Tack)





209. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Tyne & Wear, September 1981 (colour print: K. G. Dures)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 100, 4)

Cambridgeshire Purls Bridge, in song, 24th May to 17th June (R. G. Newell *et al.*) (plate 210).

Devon Slapton, 13th April (P. Aley, P. James).

Gloucestershire Frampton-upon-Severn, in song, 31st May to 28th June, trapped 31st, song recorded by R. K. Bircher (R. K. Bircher, J. Callinan, T. D. Evans *et al.*).

Highland Noss Farm, Wick, Caithness, 12th to 13th May, trapped 13th (K. W. Banks, H. Clark *et al.*).

(Europe, southwest and east Asia and north Africa) A handful have been found during the first few days of May, but the Slapton bird is the first for April.

210. Male Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Cambridgeshire, May 1981 (Nigel R. Jones)



Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 11, 4)

Humberside Spurn, adult, 5th to 7th September, trapped 5th (B. Banson, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, 28th September to 8th October (R. J. Fairbank, D. G. H. Mills, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*). St Mary's, 15th October to 1st November (D. R. Bishop, Dr A. M. Hanby *et al.*) (plate 211).

Shetland Out Skerries, 11th to 17th September, trapped 16th (D. M. Pullan, E. Taft).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran) A record year. The St Mary's bird is the first to remain here into November.



211. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Scilly, October 1981 (colour print: Roger Tidman)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 80, 9)

Borders St Abb's Head, ♂, 26th to 27th June (R. Burgess, P. M. Ellis, S. R. Warman *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, first-year ♂, 12th to 13th May, trapped 12th (M. & Mrs W. Rogers, G. Walbridge, D. Walker *et al.*).

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, 1st to at least 23rd June, trapped 1st (C. McLardy, P. J. Roberts *et al.*).

Highland Wick, Caithness, ♀, 15th May (K. W. Banks, E. W. E. Maughan).

Lincolnshire Near Humberstone, ♂, 12th to 13th May (H. Bunn, G. P. Catley, M. Mellor).

Man Calf of Man, ♂, trapped, 24th May (C. Antolik, P. P. Jennings, J. P. Redwood).

Shetland Whalsay, ♀, trapped, 8th May (Dr B. Marshall). Out Skerries, ♂, 12th May (J. N. Dymond).

1980 Northumberland Low Hauxley, first-winter ♀, 26th to 27th October, trapped 26th (S. W. Anderson, T. A. Cadwallender, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

1980 Scilly St Mary's, first-winter ♀, 24th to at least 29th October, trapped but not ringed 28th (B. Bland, J. F. Cooper, C. Murphy *et al.*).

(South Europe, west Turkey and northwest Africa) Also, a male at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, from 9th to 11th May. A good year, exceeded only by the 11 in 1979. The late October females in 1980 were both very difficult to distinguish from Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata*, as was another in Caithness in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 485-486); in view of this, some past records of Spectacled Warbler are currently under review.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 7, 2)

Fife Isle of May, ♂, 30th May (N. Aebischer *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 16th April (J. W. Hale, J. L. F. & Mrs R. Parslow, J. D. Sanders).

(South Europe, Middle East and north Africa) An adult male, the first record for the Netherlands, was in a suburban garden in Amsterdam from 14th December 1980 to 22nd February 1981. Like wintering Blackcaps *S. atricapilla*, it was seen to feed on peanuts in a bag and on bread (*Dutch Birding* 3: 102-103 & plate 48). This may have been the first instance of wintering in northwest Europe and suggests that the species could easily survive a mild Scillies winter. Thus, the St Agnes bird was conceivably the same as that recorded on nearby Tresco from 25th September to at least end October 1980.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* (2, 1, 2)

Norfolk Stiffkey, 17th August (T. J. James, B. L. Sage).

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, 16th to 22nd October (R. B. Hastings, P. K. Greaves, J. M. Turton *et al.*) (plate 212).

(South Europe, northwest Africa, east to Turkestan) The earlier records were near Witherby, North Yorkshire, on 6th July 1848, at Portland, Dorset, on 20th September 1955 and at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 22nd October 1967. Two in a year is outstanding, as was the welcome long stay of the one on St Mary's.



212. Male Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*, Scilly, October 1981 (colour print: Peter Basterfield)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 120, 11)

Gwynedd Bardsey, in song, 7th June (P. J. Roberts, D. Suddaby).

Kent Sandwich Bay, trapped, 25th August (D. M. Batchelor, M. P. Sutherland *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 31st August (B. M. & J. R. Clarkson). Gibraltar Point, trapped, 2nd September (R. Lambert, C. J. Mead, J. P. Shaughnessy *et al.*).

Man Calf of Man, 13th to 14th July, trapped 13th (P. P. Jennings, J. P. Redwood).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-year, trapped, 17th September (Dr K. F. & Mrs H. P. Woodbridge). Holm, Mainland, first-year, 26th to 27th September, trapped 26th (M. Gray, E. R. Meek). North Ronaldsay, 10th October (M. Gray, G. Macdonald).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, trapped, 16th September (A. Broome, D. Gibbs, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 1st September (F. K. Cobb, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, in song, 19th May (C. F. Winyard *et al.*).

(Eurasia east from northern Germany) The Calf of Man bird brings to

mind the interesting series of June records there during the 1970s. Singing males were found on 19th June 1974, on 7th June 1975 and from 22nd to 24th June 1978, and one was trapped on 25th June 1979. With continuous, though very slow, expansion of its breeding range westwards in Europe, we can hope for colonisation, but perhaps it will surprise everyone by getting to the Isle of Man first? Also noteworthy are the first three for Orkney and the complete absence of this species during 1980, the first blank year since before 1958.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 86, 14)

Devon Lundy, 5th October (F. R. Cleaves, J. B. O. Rossetti).

Humberside Spurn, first-year, 2nd to 6th September, trapped 3rd (B. Banson, B. R. Spence, R. Twigg *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, first-year, 4th to 5th September, trapped 4th, re-trapped 5th (S. W. Andrews *et al.*).

Orkney Holm, mainland, first-year, trapped, 15th September (R. G. Adam, E. R. Meek, A. Rendall).

Scilly St Martin's, trapped, 29th September (M. R. Fletcher). St Mary's, 2nd to 5th October (J. F. Ryan *et al.*); another, 11th to 14th (R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, 22nd August (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Whalsay, 12th September (Dr B. Marshall, W. Meechan, J. J. Sweeney); another, 13th (Dr B. Marshall, I. S. Robertson *et al.*). Lunna Ness, 14th to 15th September (C. Kightley, M. Parr *et al.*). Virkie, 12th & 14th September (J. D. Hall *et al.*). Lerwick, 16th September (J. D. Hall *et al.*). Boddam, 6th October (M. Heubeck).

(North Fenno-Scandia east to Alaska) A remarkable influx, the previous record total being a mere eight in 1970 and again in 1976.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 145, 30)

Devon Prawle Point, trapped, 8th November (D. M. Norman, A. K. Searle *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 8th November (M. Cade *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, two, 18th October (Dr B. McCarthy, A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*); another, 18th to 20th, trapped 18th (J. Cudworth, P. A. Doherty, B. R. Spence *et al.*). Easington, 20th October (A. Grieve).

Kent Dungeness, trapped, 31st October (D. Buffery, D. Okines, K. Redshaw *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 18th to 19th October (B. M. Clarkson *et al.*).

Lothian Near Tynninghame, 22nd to 23rd October, trapped 22nd (R. F. & Mrs. J. P. Durman *et al.*).

Man Calf of Man, trapped, 27th October (P. P. Jennings, J. P. Redwood).

Norfolk Holkham Meads, at least five: 18th to 20th October, two, 18th (J. A. Ginnever, J. B. Kemp, T. Kuechel); another, 23rd, and two more 24th, two remaining to 25th, one to 26th (M. Fiszer, D. Foster, J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Stiffkey, 25th October (D. Foster, M. D. Ottley). Holme, 18th to 22nd October, trapped 21st (H. Ramsay, S. P. Singleton *et al.*). Winterton, 23rd October (G. Allport, P. V. Hayman *et al.*).

Northumberland Bamburgh, trapped, 23rd October (M. S. & Mrs A. Hodgson).

Scilly St Martin's, 23rd to 27th October, two, 26th (D. J. Britton *et al.*). St Mary's, four: 5th November (T. Baker, J. McLoughlin, J. A. Wolstencroft); 5th to 6th November (T. Baker, R. Butts, J. McLoughlin *et al.*); 6th to 10th November, two, 6th (T. Baker, J. McLoughlin, J. A. Wolstencroft *et al.*).

Suffolk Benaere, 15th to 19th November (J. C. Eaton, P. Millford, D. Riley *et al.*); another, 18th to 19th (F. K. Cobb, G. J. Jobson, N. Williams). Landguard, 15th to 16th October (P. W. Murphy *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 19th to 20th November (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

Tyne & Wear Priors Park, trapped 23rd, released 24th October (Miss M. Carruthers, K. G. Dures, B. Galloway).

At sea North Sea, oil rig *Auk Alpha*, 56° 24'N 02° 15'E, about 300 km east of Fife Ness, Fife, 18th October (R. A. Schofield).

1980 Cheshire Bidston Hill, Wirral, 25th to 26th November, trapped 25th (A. Ormond *et al.*).

1980 Kent Sandwich Bay, 5th to 7th November (M. K. Briggs), additional to those already published (*Brit. Birds* 74: 486).

(Central, east and southeast Asia) It is fitting that the splendid array of Asiatic goodies during 1981 included a record number of this hyperactive little gem. The previous record of 29 also occurred during an outstanding year for 'sibes': the memorable 1975.

Kadde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 27, 2)

Northumberland Low Hauxley, 4th to 6th October, trapped 4th, retrapped 5th and 6th (B. Galloway, I. Kerr, J. Richardson *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 22nd October (I. K. Dawson, C. A. Mason *et al.*).

(Central and east Asia) Somewhat surprisingly, Fair Isle has never recorded this robust *Phylloscopus*, but the obliging Tresco bird takes the Scilly tally to six.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 29, 0)

1980 Kent Dungeness, first-year, trapped, 6th November (M. Boilstone, K. Redshaw).

(Central and northeast to southeast Asia) A blank year, but there is one under consideration.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 65, 6)

Scilly St Agnes, in song, 8th to 13th May (D. R. & M. S. Bishop, G. Lightfoot, C. D. Unsworth *et al.*). St Mary's, in song, 14th to 15th May (D. B. Hunt, G. Lightfoot, D. Page *et al.*), considered different individual from that on St Agnes.

Shetland Out Skerries, 22nd September (D. M. Pullan, C. Roberts, E. Tait).

Suffolk Landguard, 13th September (M. A. Last, M. Wright *et al.*).

(Central, west and south Europe, Levant and northwest Africa) Also singles at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 30th August to 1st September and from 12th to 18th September. A record for the Channel Islands concerns a trapped individual at La Foureraie, Sark, on 6th October. There are ten autumn records from Scilly, but only one previously in spring, on 7th May 1975, so the almost simultaneous arrival of the two here was unexpected.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 9, 0)

1979 Essex Frinton-on-Sea, ♂, 6th June (Mrs P. Harris).

(Central and southeast Europe, west Russia and south to Iran) There was also a male at Bressay, Shetland, on 23rd and 24th May 1979. This was the first time that two had occurred in one year.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 3, 3)

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, 9th to 13th May, trapped 9th (P. J. Roberts, D. Suddaby *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: 385-386, plate 144).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, probably first-year ♂ and first-year ♀, 25th November to at least 4th January 1982 (A. Grieve, D. Hursthouse, D. Norton *et al.*).

(Scattered from western Europe east to Manchuria) This species is rather rapidly extending its breeding range westwards in Europe and the recent first successful breeding in the Netherlands (*Brit. Birds* 75: 271), and increasing vagrancy here, suggests that colonisation is imminent. The pair at Blacktoft faced some of the most severe weather experienced in Britain for decades and certainly survived the first wave in mid December. What happened after that nobody knows, but, if they survived . . .



Fig. 5. Adult male Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Shetland, October 1981 (colour sketches: J. F. Holloway)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 14, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, adult ♂, showing characters of one of the races *isabellinus-phoenicuroides-speculigerus*, but closest to *speculigerus*, 9th to 12th October (G. Bashford, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (fig. 5).

(South Asia to China) Following A. R. Dean's paper on the field identification of this beautiful shrike (*Brit. Birds* 75: 395-406), all past records are being reviewed.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 80, 3)

Humberside Spurn, adult, 30th August to about 8th September (J. Cudworth, B. G. Pepper, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

Northumberland Beal Sands, 4th and 7th June (J. D. Lough *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Barmston Pond, 20th May (M. K. Watson).

1980 Somerset West Sedgmoor, 22nd to 23rd July (*Brit. Birds* 74: 488), first seen 21st (per J. A. McGeogh).

(South and east Europe and southwest Asia) Nothing unusual about this average crop.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 304, 21)

Cornwall Porthgarra, 14th to at least 23rd May (H. P. K. Robinson, P. R. Wilcox *et al.*), Tregony, adult, 20th October to 10th November (G. P. Gill, M. Hopper *et al.*).

Devon Inner Hope, 27th to 29th May (S. & Mrs M. Whatmough).

Dorset Portland, 12th April (J. Delve, N. Green, G. Lightfoot *et al.*); another, 23rd (D. Walker), Worth Maltravers, 6th to 9th June (M. Cannings, R. J. H. Murray, E. M. Rayner *et al.*), Arne, 28th June (T. Baker, Miss J. Birley, M. Dowding *et al.*).

Dyfed Dale, Pembrokeshire, 16th May (M. Sainsbury).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, 24th to 26th May (A. E. Hopkins, S. J. Moon, Mrs V. Sugar).

Grampian Rattray Head, 13th to 11th May (R. A. Schofield *et al.*).

Gwynedd Cemlyn, Anglesey, juvenile, 26th August (K. G. Croft, R. Evans). Bardsey, juvenile, 4th September (S. Hughes, M. Ketcher, J. Walford).

Hampshire Dibden Bay, 14th June (R. E. Cooke).

Humberside Welton Ings, 12th June (N. P. Senior).

Man Calf of Man, 26th June (P. P. Jennings, J. P. Redwood).

Oxfordshire Wheatley, probable ♀, 1st June to at least 31st July (Mrs P. Butcher, M. H. Rowntree *et al.*). Little Milton, ♂, 12th July to at least 2nd August (P. Allen, R. Burgess, R. Hodgkins *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 19th to at least 29th May (I. Burrows *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 31st May (C. F. Winyard). Hove, 10th to 13th June (J. C. Mallam, R. L. Rowland).

Western Isles Loch Druidibeg, South Uist, 7th to 8th June (B. Etheridge).

1980 Devon South Huish, adult, 11th August (P. W. & Mrs Stafford).

1980 Gwynedd Bardsey, 12th to 15th July, trapped 15th, presumed same 21st to 22nd (P. J. Roberts *et al.*).

(West, central and south Europe, southwest Asia and north Africa). A late Irish record is of one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 14th and 15th August 1980. This waxen image of a bird used to top the 20 mark with some regularity: there were 21 as long ago as 1958 and 1960, when far fewer observers were in the field. The Portland bird was very early, but there is at least one earlier record: at Annet, Scilly, on 9th April 1956.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 107, 5)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, adult, 11th July (H. P. K. Robinson, L. P. Williams).

Highland Achnamara, Argyll, adult, 17th October (Mrs I. Rainier).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 14th September to at least 26th October (Dr R. C. Brace *et al.*) (plate 213). Tresco, juvenile, 23rd to 25th September (O. Pineau, M. J. Rogers, J. Seriot *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, adult, 25th May (E. Tait).

1976 Cheshire Middlewich, adult, 24th to 26th June (T. & Mrs Wharton).

213. Juvenile Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Scilly, October 1981 (Tim Loseby)



1979 Shetland North Nesting, Mainland, adult, 7th to 8th August (D. J. B. White *et al.*), probably same as Eshaness adult, 18th to at least 21st (*Brit. Birds* 73: 526).

1979 Yorkshire, North Malham, adult, 30th June to 1st July (G. & Mrs K. Tulloch *et al.*).

1980 Orkney Skall, Mainland, first-summer, 14th to 23rd June (Dr M. F. Cutlibert *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and southwest Asia) Also, on the Channel Islands, a juvenile at Chouet Head, Guernsey, on 8th September, and an adult at St Peter Port, Guernsey, on 17th and 18th October, trapped on 18th. This is now an annual year-tick on the Scillies, and 1981 was the fifth successive year that a juvenile settled during October.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* (0, 0, 1)

Norfolk Cley, 14th June (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(South Europe, northwest Africa, west and central Asia) A totally unexpected and exciting addition to our list. Found on a Sunday morning and watched at close range for half an hour, it was unfortunately lost by 10 a.m. There can rarely have been so many sad faces at Cley as on that afternoon.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 10, 5)

Devon Prawle Point, 27th September (J. C. Nicholls, A. K. Searle, N. L. Trigg *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 27th, perhaps 26th September to at least 5th October (D. B. Hunt, P. R. G. Marriott, P. D. White *et al.*); another, 29th September to 10th October (D. G. H. Mills, R. J. Walker *et al.*). Treco, 11th and 13th October (I. K. Dawson, K. C. Osborne *et al.*), possibly same as one of St Mary's individuals.

(North America) Also singles at Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 24th September and at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, from 26th September to 1st October: the fourth and fifth Irish records. An outstanding influx. There have never before been more than two in a year. Nine of the previous records were between 4th and 14th October, the others being on 25th and 27th September. Thus, this arrival of five between 24th and 29th September was not only very concentrated but also early.

Serín *Serinus serinus* (76, 321, 30)

Cornwall Marazion, 2nd to at least 13th June (B. Pattenden). The Lizard, 5th November (B. Cave, S. C. Hutchings).

Devon Locality A, 9th April to 10th July, two ♂♂ in song, one probable ♀, breeding attempted, but probably unsuccessful (per P. W. Ellicott). Locality B, 12th April to 29th July, at least two ♂♂ in song and one ♀, one pair breeding successfully, rearing at least three young (per P. W. Ellicott). Locality C, 21st April to at least 28th August, two ♂♂ in song, one ♀; one pair reared two broods of three young (per P. W. Ellicott). Some eight other records from various proximate localities between 11th April and 26th September are considered likely to have related to one or other of the breeding parties.

Dorset Portland, 9th April (S. J. Aspinall); ♀, 12th April (K. M. Godfrey, A. M. Hanby, J. Warne *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 8th September (D. Buffery); 5th November (H. A. R. Cawkell, D. L. Davenport). North Foreland, two immatures, 28th October (F. Solly, M. P. Sutherland).

Norfolk Holme, ♀ or immature, 18th April (V. Eve).

Scilly Treco, at least 4th May (D. B. Hunt, R. O'Reilly *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 27th May; ♂, 3rd June (R. H. Charlwood).

1979 Norfolk Brundall, ♂, late May and June (B. D. Harding).

1980 Devon South Milton Ley, ♂, 15th December (R. Burridge, D. Wood).

1980 Kent Dungeness, 7th November (Dr A. M. Hanby, P. J. Grant).

1980 Norfolk Muckleborough Hill, ♂, 24th to 25th May (M. P. Lee, M. Hill, Dr M. P. Taylor *et al.*).

1980 Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♂, 11th May (R. H. Charlwood).

(West, central and southern Europe) Also, in the Channel Islands, an estimated 20 pairs on Jersey, and two males on Guernsey on 16th April. An excellent year for breeding in Devon. The only previous published records of breeding were in Dorset in 1967 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 357), in East Sussex in 1969 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 290) and in Devon in 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 541). The species is, however, migratory in the northern parts of its breeding range and this makes permanent colonisation that much more difficult (compare the rather slow colonisation by Savi's Warbler with the rapid establishment of Cetti's Warbler). So, we will just have to wait and see.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 59, 2)

Shetland Sumburgh, 4th October (M. S. Chapman), Fair Isle, 15th to 17th October (P. Colley, R. Eades, Dr R. J. Raines *et al.*) (fig. 6).

1978 Shetland Fair Isle, 29th to 30th December (J. F. Holloway) (fig. 6).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Some appropriate settings for this frosty little finch.



Fig. 6. Arctic Redpolls *Acanthus hornemanni*, Shetland: left, October 1981; right, December 1978 (colour sketches: J. F. Holloway)

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (200, 558, 42)

All records relate to ♀♀ or immatures unless otherwise stated.

Gwynedd Bardsey, 5th June (P. J. Roberts, P. K. Veron).

Highland Rhum, Inverness, ♂, 11th July (L. V. Black, P. B. Duncan). Locality withheld, 1st July (S. Aspinall, A. J. Merritt).

Kent Dungeness, 1st September (D. Bullery, R. A. J. Forsythie, K. Redshaw *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, first-summer ♂, 30th May (Mrs M. R. Clarke).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 18th August (M. J. D. Hirons, K. F. Miller, D. Simpson), Holy Island, 3rd to 7th October (Dr C. Bradshaw, P. W. Davidson, Drs M. P. & J. Eccles *et al.*), Bamburgh, 23rd October (M. S. and Mrs A. Hodgson).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 21st to 22nd May; ♀, 20th to 22nd and 26th, two, 21st (J. & R. McCutcheon, Dr K. F. Woodbridge); immature, trapped, 6th September; another, 13th to 22nd, trapped 13th (Dr K. F. Woodbridge); 3rd to 4th October (Dr K. F. & Mrs H. Woodbridge). Deerness, Mainland, 11th September (E. J. Williams). South Ronaldsay, 12th September (J. & R. McCutcheon), possibly another, 13th (E. R. Meek).

Scilly St Mary's, 12th to at least 24th October (D. G. H. Mills, A. Roberts *et al.*), Treco, 25th October (N. Martin, M. J. Parr *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 20th to 21st May (A. Brown, G. D. Rowley, K. D. Shaw *et al.*); probable first-summer ♂, 23rd May to 2nd June, trapped 23rd (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*);

27th May to 1st June (J. F. Holloway, N. J. & Mrs E. A. Riddiford *et al.*), 8th to 9th June (J. F. & Mrs S. Holloway, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); in autumn, six: 2nd September; 2nd to 3rd; 6th to 9th; 11th to 13th, trapped 11th; 11th to 19th, trapped 11th; 22nd (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Sumburgh, 13th May, same, Grutness, 14th (I. G. Davidson); Sumburgh, 23rd (C. Kightley, S. M. Whitehouse); ♂ and ♀, 29th (P. Callaway, A. Hawkins); 25th to 27th August, trapped 25th (M. S. Chapman, J. D. Okill, S. M. Whitehouse). Scatness, ♂, 26th to 27th May (P. Callaway, C. Kightley, J. Miller *et al.*). Virkie, two, 16th May (C. Kightley, S. M. Whitehouse). Boddam, two, 27th August (M. S. Chapman). Billester, Mainland, 13th September (J. D. Okill). Strand, Mainland, 22nd August (J. McCarthy, J. D. Okill).

Western Isles St Kilda, first-summer ♂, 7th June (P. D. Anderson, D. Simpson *et al.*).

1975 Scilly St Mary's, 6th to 7th October (J. E. Fortey).

1980 Humberside Spurn, 20th September (J. Cudworth, R. V. Lansdown, G. Thomason *et al.*).

1980 Sussex, East Beachy Head, trapped, 24th September (R. D. M. Edgar, Miss S. P. Hitchings, D. E. Lester *et al.*).

(East Europe and across Asia and east Turkey to Himalayas) Also one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 13th October and one at Copeland Bird Observatory, Co. Antrim, on 4th September 1977. Thus, 14 in May, three in June, two in July, five in August, 12 in September and six in October. A good crop in spring, which is when we want them if colonisation is to occur, as it surely will.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia* (0, 0, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, 27th to 28th September (S. D. Enright, W. & Mrs E. McGubbin, A. Sumner *et al.*).

(North America) Another super addition to our list. It managed only twentieth position in Chandler S. Robbins's interesting computer predictions of the most likely Nearctic landbirds to be added to the European list (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457), but was not totally unexpected. It arrived with an unprecedented influx of Red-eyed Vireos.

American wood-warbler *Dendroica* (1, 25, 1)

1979 Scilly St Mary's, 10th October (P. J. Dunn, P. D. Goriup, C. A. Mason).

(North America) This was probably a Blackpoll Warbler *D. striata*, but the details noted were insufficient for certain identification. There is, however, no doubt that this was a species of *Dendroica* warbler and, as such, forms part of the pattern of transatlantic landbird vagrancy. The totals include those specifically identified.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* (0, 2, 1)

Cornwall Nanquidno, first-year ♂, 11th October (D. Gibbs, J. Holding *et al.*).

(North America) The previous records were also immature males: on St Mary's, Scilly, on 4th October 1970 and on Tresco, Scilly, from 28th September to 3rd October 1975.

Slate-coloured Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 8, 0)

1980 At sea North Sea, 53° 19' N 02° 37' E, about 50 km northeast of Cromer, Norfolk, caught on board ship, 24th May, ringed and released, Holme, Norfolk, 31st, last seen 2nd June (B. Avis, J. G. Goldsmith, J. G. Gribble).

(North America) Those who saw this 'illegal immigrant' in Norfolk were faced with considerable ethical difficulties. It no doubt found its way onto a few life-lists!

1980 Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, age uncertain, 12th to 23rd October, trapped 12th (P. J. Ewins, A. R. Kitson, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

(Northeast Asia and east China) This species came close to a place on our list in 1975, when a strong claim from Holkham, Norfolk, on 19th October was prematurely published in this journal (*Brit. Birds* 69: 358), but subsequently rejected by the BOU Records Committee. This splendid occurrence on Fair Isle has rekindled interest in the earlier record, but has not yet given it the kiss of life.

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, 29th March (P. J. Roberts, M. P. Sutherland) (fig. 7).

Scilly St Mary's, 4th to 7th October (D. S. Flumm, N. A. G. Lord *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, trapped, 21st May (P. Alker, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); age/sex indeterminate, 10th to 11th October (J. M. Dickson *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, 26th to 27th May (P. D. Anderson, A. M. Handley, J. Strowger *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across to north Asia) In view of Lars Svensson's statement in his *Identification Guide to European Passerines* (1975) that the ageing and sexing of this species is extremely difficult in autumn, some previous assessments of age and sex in our reports may be doubtful. The Bardsey bird could be the earliest ever, the only contender being the pair at Torphins, Grampian, at the 'end March' 1905.

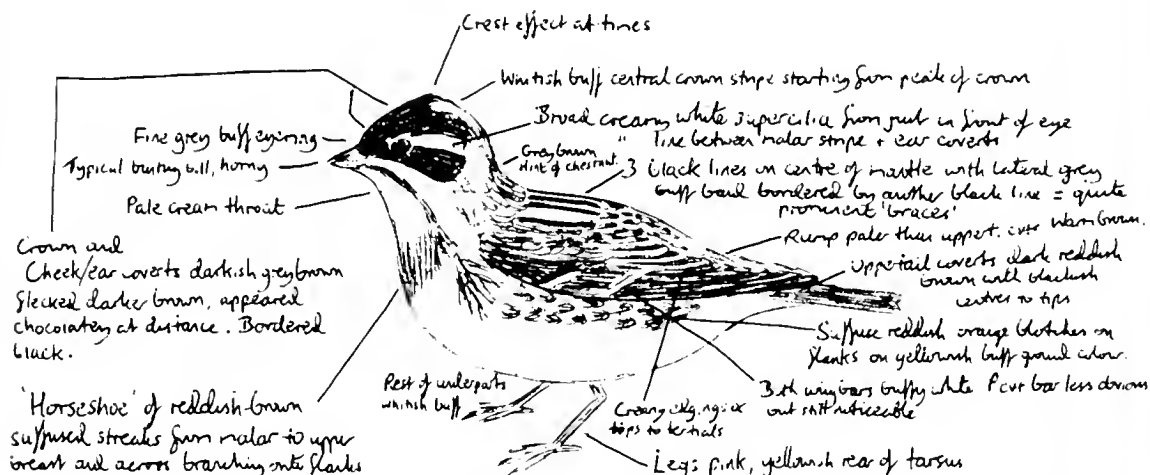


Fig. 7. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Gwynedd, March 1981 (*M. P. Sutherland*)

Dorset Portland, ♀, 21st to 22nd April, trapped 21st (M. J. Gee, M. Rogers *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 27th October to 5th November (T. Baker, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 3rd May (J. D. Okill, N. J. Riddiford, I. Sandison *et al.*); autumn, at least five: 4th to 11th October, two, 8th and 10th, three, 9th and 11th, one trapped 11th (N. J. Riddiford, C. D. Rowley *et al.*). Whalsay, 4th October (Dr B. Marshall). Out Skerries, 6th October (D. M. Pullan, E. Tait).

1979 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 30th September (P. J. Dunn).

1980 Orkney North Ronaldsay, trapped, 13th October (Dr K. F. Woodbridge).

(Northeast Europe and north Asia) There are a few early records for Orkney, but this is the first since at least 1958.

Shetland Fair Isle, three ♀♀ or immatures: 2nd to 3rd September (K. P. Elsby, J. F.

Holloway, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 7th to 8th (P. T. Bell, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); 22nd to 25th (D. Page *et al.*). Out Skerries, ♀ or immature, 13th to 19th September (D. M. Pullan, E. Tait *et al.*).
(Northeast Europe across north Asia) Four typical records.

Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-year, 17th to 18th September, trapped 17th (A. Broome, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(Central and eastern Siberia south to Mongolia) The first record was also on Fair Isle, from 29th September to 11th October 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 402-408). This bird, plus some useful notes from Mongolia by Alan Kitson (73: 400-401), led to a greater understanding of the field characters of this former mystery bird. Perhaps we can now look forward to regular discoveries?

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 7, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 7th October (R. P. Bowman, G. G. Williams *et al.*).

(North America) The sixth for Scilly and exactly two years since the last, on St Agnes on 7th October 1979.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Brit. Birds* 64: 429)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (not known, 7, 0)

1971 Norfolk Breydon, three pelicans, one definitely of this species, 31st August (B. J. Brown, M. J. Jenner *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, west and southwest Asia and Africa) How many other records remain unreported?

Yellow-shafted Flicker *Colaptes auratus* (0, 1, 0)

(North America) The corpse of one of these interesting American woodpeckers was found in Caithness in July. Its condition indicated that the bird had probably died on board a ship and decomposed in dry conditions, aided by blow-fly larvae, before being brought ashore in or on a goods container. We are indebted to E. W. E. Maughan, who has the remains, for this information and for his diligent enquiries. This species achieved fifth position in Chandler S. Robbins's assessments of the most likely Nearctic landbirds to be added to the European list (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457), but, sadly, this individual never made it.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* (0, 0, 1)

Suffolk Landguard Point, 30th June to 4th July (Miss L. M. Cartwright, T. D. Charlton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 236).

(North America) The decision to place this striking New World sparrow in category D will disappoint the many who saw it. With ships travelling direct from Texas to Felixstowe passing within a few hundred metres of Landguard Point, however, ship-assisted passage does seem about as certain as it can be without the event actually being witnessed. No doubt the debate will not end here!

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* (0, 5, 1)

Shetland Noss, 8th June (D. Butler).

(North and Central America) The third during June; the others occurred in April, May and July.

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted**1981**

White-billed Diver Lambholm, Orkney, 14th June. **Black-browed Albatross** Hopes Nose, Devon, 1st August. **Cory's Shearwater** Prawle Point, Devon, 18th April; Porthgarra, Cornwall, 11th July; Aberystwyth, Dyfed, 6th August; Dungeness, Kent, 16th August; Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, 21st August; Hopes Nose, Devon, 31st August; Prawle Point, Devon, 5th September; Formby Point, Lancashire, two, 20th September; St Mary's, Scilly, 26th September; Hayling Bay, Hampshire, 19th October. **Little Shearwater** Portland, Dorset, 29th July; Strumble Head, Dyfed, 13th September. **Night Heron** Minsmere, Suffolk, 18th July; Laugharne, Dyfed, 30th August. **Squacco Heron** Nantwich, Cheshire, 5th July. **Cattle Egret** Castle Semple Loch, Strathclyde, 18th to 20th January. **Little Egret** Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk, 13th June. **Purple Heron** Seaton, Devon, 11th October. **White Stork** Barham, Kent, 25th January; Chichester, West Sussex, 28th August. **Lesser White-fronted Goose** Gadloch, Strathclyde, 10th May. **Harlequin Duck** Pitts Deep, Hampshire, 22nd November. **Surf Scoter** Holy Island, Northumberland, 22nd February; Bardsey, Gwynedd, 30th October; Llantfairfechan, Gwynedd, 30th October. **Black Kite** Thorne Moors, South Yorkshire, 9th May; Prawle Point, Devon, 11th to 12th April; Verne Common, Dorset, 16th April; Walberswick, Suffolk, 11th August; Elmley, Kent, 12th August. **White-tailed Eagle** Wentwood Forest, Gwent, 2nd October. **Red-footed Falcon** Harby, Nottinghamshire, 6th May; Eagle Barnsdale, Lincolnshire/Nottinghamshire, 11th May; Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 24th May; Bewl Bridge Reservoir, East Sussex/Kent, 5th June; Portsmouth, Hampshire, 29th July. **Gyrfalcon** Dawlish, Devon, 5th November. **Crane** Northiam, East Sussex, 16th December; Dolgoed, Gwynedd, 17th December; Rothley, Leicestershire, 19th December. **Black-winged Stilt** Portland, Dorset, 4th May. **Pratincole** Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 13th July. **Lesser Golden Plover** Frodsham, Cheshire, 18th October. **Sociable Plover** Near Gummersdale, North Yorkshire, two, 8th May. **Least Sandpiper** Siblyback Reservoir, Cornwall, 27th September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 11th August; Tresco, Scilly, 21st September. **Great Snipe** Dunnet Head, Highland, 1st April; Dale of Walls, Mainland, Shetland, 21st September; Church Wilne Reservoir, Derbyshire, 6th November. **Dowitcher** Dryslwyn, Dyfed, 18th August; Steart, Somerset, 1st September; Northam Burrows, Devon, 14th November. **Slender-billed Curlew** Hayle, Cornwall, 24th to 27th October. **Greater Yellowlegs** Lake Vyrnwy, Powys, 21st August. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Parrett Estuary, Somerset, 8th October. **Terek Sandpiper** Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 8th May. **Spotted Sandpiper** Penzance, Cornwall, 6th October. **Great Black-headed Gull** Epsom, Surrey, 25th February. **Laughing Gull** Covehithe, Suffolk, 14th November; Holyhead, Gwynedd, 15th November. **Franklin's Gull** Slapton, Devon, 17th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Ferrybridge, Dorset, two, 20th May; Cley, Norfolk, 5th September. **Slender-billed Gull** Kingsbury Water Park, Warwickshire, 17th May. **Ross's Gull** Minsmere, Suffolk, 13th December. **Whiskered Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 5th May; Dungeness, Kent, 26th May. **White-winged Black Tern** Chichester Gravel-pits, West Sussex, 9th September; 12th September; Slapton Ley, Devon, 11th September. **Alpine Swift** Haverigg, Cumbria, 16th May; Bratton, Wiltshire, 16th May; near Studland, Dorset, 14th June. **Bee-eater** East Boldon, Tyne & Wear, 18th August. **White-winged Lark** Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 17th December. **Short-toed Lark** St Agnes, Scilly, 14th October. **Crested Lark** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 13th April. **Richard's Pipit** Bardsey, Gwynedd, 3rd October; Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 5th October; Broadstairs, Kent, 23rd October; Portland, Dorset, 7th November (originally submitted as Tawny Pipit); Siddick Pond, Cumbria, 11th December. **Tawny Pipit** Portland, Dorset, 10th September. **Olive-backed Pipit** Allhallows, Kent, 17th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Marshside Marsh, Merseyside, 22nd March; Strumble Head, Dyfed, 25th April; Stanford Water, Leicestershire, 25th April; Castle Martin, Dyfed, 31st May; Morston, Norfolk, two, 27th September. **Black-headed Wagtail** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 10th to 12th May; Spurn, Humberside, 17th to 19th May. **Citrine Wagtail** Tresco, Scilly, 4th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Portland, Dorset, 2nd May; Landguard, Suffolk, 4th August. **Blue Rock Thrush** Barnes, Greater London, 17th October. **Swainson's Thrush** Aberystwyth, Dyfed, 1st to 5th October. **Naumann's Thrush** Whittington, Gloucestershire, 22nd February. **Black-throated Thrush** Bacton, Norfolk, 25th March; Cruden Bay, Grampian, 10th December. **Red-throated Thrush** Iden, East Sussex, 29th March. **Savi's Warbler** Altrincham, Greater Manchester, 12th April; St Mary's, Scilly, 23rd to 24th April; Marshside Marsh, Merseyside, 8th May; Reckford Bridge, Suffolk, 31st May to 6th June; Durlston, Dorset, 2nd to 3rd August. **Aquatic Warbler** Winterton, Norfolk, 15th August; Benacre, Suffolk, 27th August; Portland, Dorset, 1st September; Rutland Water, Leicestershire, 5th September; Portland, Dorset, 7th September; Keyhaven Marsh, Hampshire, 20th September; Exminster Marsh, Devon, 27th September. **Oliveaceous Warbler** Theddlethorpe, Lincolnshire, 11th May. **Booted Warbler** Landguard, Suffolk, 18th August. **Olive-tree Warbler** Strelley, Nottinghamshire, no date. **Greenish Warbler** Tresco, Scilly, 5th October. **Arctic Warbler** Priors Park, Tyne & Wear, trapped, 18th September; Landguard, Suffolk, 27th October. **Dusky Warbler** Studland Heath, Dorset, 20th to 21st September; Tresco, Scilly, 5th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** Cadbury Lane Camp, Avon, 3rd August; Point of Air, Cley, 16th August; Holkham Meads, Norfolk, 25th October. **Serín** Dungeness, Kent, 13th May; Bardsey, Gwynedd, 22nd June; Kinder Reservoir, Derbyshire, 2nd August; St Mary's, Scilly, 2nd October; Elton, Hereford & Worcester, two, 20th December. **Citril Finch** Covehithe, Suffolk, 29th August. **Arctic Redpoll** Sudbourne, Suffolk, 2nd March. **Pine Grosbeak** Near Beaulieu, Hampshire, 22nd January. **Pine Bunting** Torrington, Devon, 17th April. **Rustic Bunting** St. Martin's, Scilly, 11th October. **Little Bunting** Cleadon Hill, Tyne & Wear, 4th October; Cawsand, Cornwall, 22nd October; at sea, North Sea, 150 km east of Flamborough Head, Humberside, caught, 23rd October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Kenovey, Tiree, Strathclyde, 5th September. **Indigo Bunting** Prawle Point, Devon, 3rd October.

1980

Albatross At sea, English Channel off Dorset, 21st September. **Cory's Shearwater** Titchwell, Norfolk, 15th August; Liverpool Bay, Merseyside, 30th August. **Magnificent Frigatebird** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 21st May. **Purple Heron** Stodmarsh, Kent, 26th May. **White Stork** Guckmere Valley, East Sussex, five, 12th May; near Dalry, Strathclyde, 30th October. **Steller's Eider** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 6th October. **White-tailed Eagle** Near Topsham, Devon, 9th

November. **Red-footed Falcon** Farlington Marshes, 12th May; New Forest, 30th May. **Little Crake** Charwelton Ponds, Northamptonshire, 6th and 27th January. **Crane** Doncaster Airfield, South Yorkshire, two, 29th April. **Least Sandpiper** Bridesness Loch, Orkney, 21st August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Gann Estuary, Dyfed, 26th August. **Baird's Sandpiper** Saltholme Pools, Cleveland, 27th September. **Dowitcher** Winterton, Norfolk, 12th April; Long Drag Pool, Cleveland, 5th September. **Great Black-headed Gull** Near Waterfoot, Dumfries & Galloway, 31st August. **Laughing Gull** Lowestoft, Suffolk, 3rd April. **Franklin's Gull** Portland, Dorset, 29th August. **Bonaparte's Gull** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 29th March; Eastham Locks Beach, Merseyside, 15th September. **Ring-billed Gull** St Mary's, Scilly, 28th to 31st October. **Whiskered Tern** Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 12th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Cley, Norfolk, 18th September; Seaford Dam Reservoir, Cleveland, 28th September. **Pallid Swift** Sizewell, Suffolk, 13th September. **Alpine Swift** Hove, East Sussex, 27th July. **Short-toed Lark** Weybourne, Norfolk, two, 26th October. **Red-rumped Swallow** Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, two, 1st September; Durlston Bay, Dorset, 3rd September; Lundy, Devon, 14th to 15th October. **Richard's Pipit** Tresco, Scilly, 20th October. **Tawny Pipit** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 29th September; Landguard, Suffolk, 18th October; Tresco, Scilly, 20th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 17th April. **Black-throated Thrush** Tilney All Saints, Norfolk, 30th November. **Savi's Warbler** Locality withheld, Somerset, 6th May. **Aquatic Warbler** Theale, Berkshire, 29th May; Chichester Harbour, West Sussex, 16th August. **Booted Warbler** Landguard, Suffolk, 17th August. **Arctic Warbler** Holme, Norfolk, 2nd September. **Bonelli's Warbler** Nacton, Suffolk, 20th August. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Hull, Humberside, 3rd July; Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 23rd October. **Parrot Crossbill** Finstown, Orkney, 1st to 2nd April; Holkham, Norfolk, 30th December. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** Tresco, Scilly, 25th October. **Rustic Bunting** Isle of May, Fife, 13th May; 22nd September. **Little Bunting** Isle of May, Fife, 22nd to 23rd September. **Pallas's Reed Bunting** Staines Reservoirs, Surrey, 20th November.

1979

White-billed Diver Handa Island, Highland, 4th May. **Black-browed Albatross** Ramsey Island, Dyfed, 8th September. **Steller's Eider** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 20th October. **White-tailed Eagle** Ronsden, Devon, 3rd April. **Lesser Kestrel** Blackrock, Cornwall, 16th September to 15th October; Sandwich Bay, Kent, 30th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Fakenham, Norfolk, 30th June. **Dowitcher** Spurn, Humberside, two, 9th September. **Tawny Pipit** Marsden, Tyne & Wear, 21st May; Marazion, Cornwall, 16th September. **Savi's Warbler** Frodsham, Cheshire, 6th May; two, 20th June. **Serin** Weston-super-Mare, Avon, 20th September. **Parrot Crossbill** Lerwick, Shetland, 26th August. **Rustic Bunting** Tresco, Scilly, 18th October.

1978

Wilson's Petrel Off Scilly, 13th September. **Great White Egret** Portland, Dorset, 22nd June. **Gyr Falcon** Ronas Hill, Shetland, 13th May. **Long-tailed Skua** Off Seacombe Ferry, Merseyside, 11th September. **Sooty or Bridled Tern** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 15th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Heysham Harbour, Lancashire, 17th to 18th September.

1977

Baikal Teal Gadloch, Strathclyde, 6th November (also February and 6th May 1978). **Dowitcher** Marshside Marsh, Merseyside, 24th September. **Siberian Stonechat** Marshside Marsh, Merseyside, 25th October.

1975

Cory's Shearwater Hilbre, Merseyside, 13th April.

1974

American Water Pipit Colney Gravel-pits, Norfolk, 25th March.

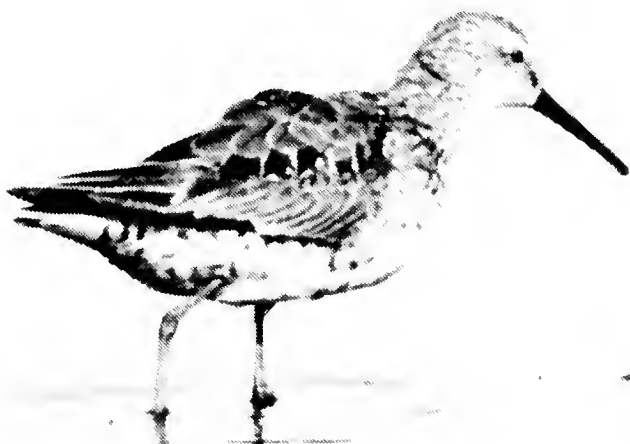
Michael J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP

Seventy-five years' ago...

'In setting down what I know of the Irish colony of the Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*), I regret that my experience of collectors, both of birds' eggs and skins, compels me to withhold those details I should like to have given. . . . In 1904, when I personally visited the locality on July 9th, I should guess there were thirty pairs. Next year, on July 4th, I walked over the ground carefully and should estimate that the pairs were then close on fifty in number, while the range of the nesting haunt had considerably increased. . . . I was told that two men, well-known members of the British Ornithologists' Union, "had that season shot two pairs of birds and had taken forty eggs." ' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 174-175, November 1907)

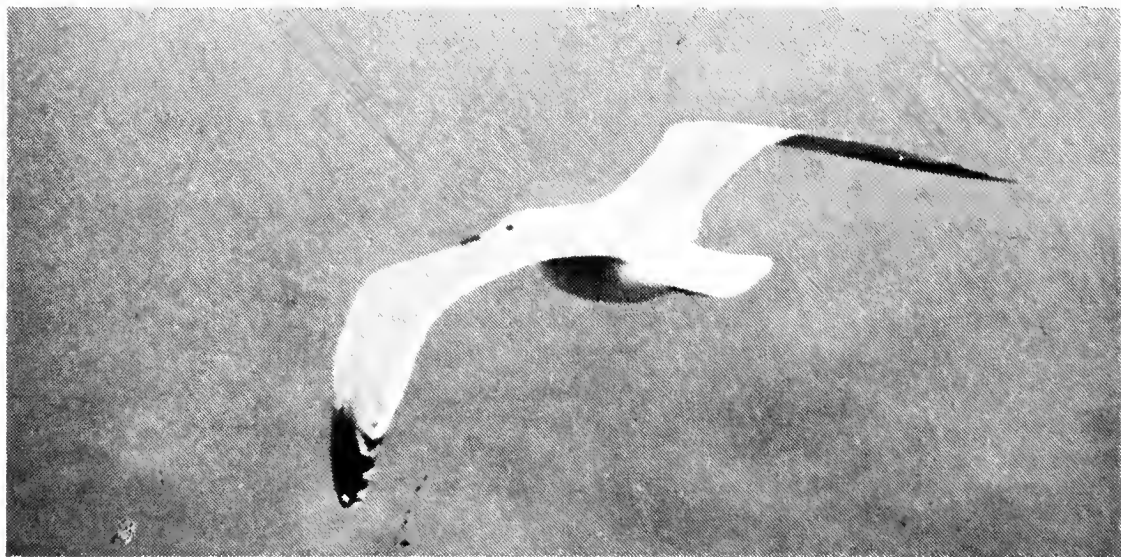
Mystery photographs

71 A wader lands in front of us and begins feeding in fairly shallow water. It is close, allowing detailed study. Although there are no other birds nearby for an accurate comparison, its general proportions and actions are those of a medium-sized species. Instantly, it looks odd,



perhaps due mainly to a combination of an unusually thick-tipped, rather tube-like bill, and heavily barred flanks and undertail-coverts. Whatever the species, we can tell that it is an adult moulting from summer to winter plumage, because the rather plain grey, pale-fringed winter plumage on the mantle and upper scapulars is newly grown and fresh, whereas the remnants of summer plumage, especially the row of blackish-centred lower scapulars, is old and worn (in real life we would have known it was August, making this age-diagnosis easier: at that time of year the only other possibility would be a juvenile, and that would be obvious as such at least by its uniformly fresh plumage). It might be safe to assume, then, that in full summer plumage the barring on the underparts would have been even more extensive and striking. This, and the decurved bill (especially that thick tip, which, however, is not stressed in the field guides) rings a bell: Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*. We settle down to checking and noting all the other features, and among them we find three that clinch the identification: pale legs (actually greenish-yellow), broad and well-marked pale supercilium, and rusty ear-coverts. We are sure of the identification even before it walks onto a drier area and shows, for the first time, the

214. Mystery photograph 72. Identify the species. Answer next month



extra-long legs from which it is named. In partial or full summer plumage, Stilt Sandpiper should attract immediate attention, but in winter and juvenile plumages it closely resembles Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* in its plumage patterns and coloration, and at a distance could be overlooked as such unless bill-shape, and leg-length and colour are habitually checked. The Curlew Sandpiper's bill is more curved and fine-tipped, and the legs are shorter and black. This photograph was taken in the USA in August 1980 by E. J. Mackrill. PJG

Notes

Little Egrets with green legs and feet M. R. Alibone (*Brit. Birds* 74: 41) noted two Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* with green feet and black-and-green legs in Greece in early August. In captivity, at the Ornithological Park of Marquenterre, Somme, France, a nestling hatched about 5th September 1978 had green legs and feet on 2nd June 1979, green legs and feet, with a broad blackish line along the outer sides of each tarsus and tibia, on 1st-9th July 1979, with the blackish more intense on 29th July to 17th August, but always different from the back of the legs of adults. In the same place, a wild juvenile (flying on 30th July) had green legs and feet, with a blackish line along the outer sides of each tarsus and tibia, on 5th September 1979. Thus, the green coloration of legs and feet can remain for nearly one year. FRANÇOIS SUEUR

Bureau de Recherches sur la Nature en Picardie, Saint-Jean 80120 Rue, France

Any further confirmatory observations will be filed for reference, but not published separately. EDS

Coots drowning Black-headed Gull At about 15.00 GMT on 19th July 1979, at Fairburn Ings RSPB Reserve, North Yorkshire, I was watching two Coots *Fulica atra* feeding their four young. A Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* flew towards their territory and alighted on the water near the young. Immediately one of the parent Coots attacked it, and very quickly the other came to assist its mate. There was a violent splashing and a flapping of wings; the Coots, using their feet viciously, held the gull under the water and drowned it, the battle being over in about a minute. The Coots began to swim towards their young. The dead gull drifted 2-3m from where the Coots had drowned it, and the Coots came a second time to inspect the gull. I. WOFFINDIN

7 Sandwell Street, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

Dr J. Horsfall has commented as follows: 'This is exactly what Coots try to do in intra-specific fighting: if one has the upper hand, it will hold the head of the other under water while



standing on its body. I have not yet seen death caused by this, but Coots, being diving birds, are probably quite difficult to drown. Two similar incidents have been published in *British Birds*: a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* was killed by drowning when very close to a Coot's nest (63: 384); and, perhaps even more surprising, a Coot successfully defended itself against attack from a Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* (54: 243).¹ Eds

A pink Black-headed Gull While searching through a flock of gulls at Fraserburgh, Grampian, on 27th December 1981, I came upon one extraordinary Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. It was an adult in winter plumage, normal except for entirely pink underparts from throat to undertail-coverts. It was not the flush shown on the breast of some small gulls and terns in breeding plumage, but a more wholesome and widespread pink, similar to the tone of the neck and body of adult Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* (e.g. as depicted by Peter Scott in *BWP*). It was so distinctive that I was able to pick it out at about 100m with the naked eye. I believe the pink colour was pigmentation rather than dye because it was so uniform in tone, symmetrical in extent, e.g. extending to sides of neck equally, and merged gradually into the normal white feathering on head, rear neck and uppertail-coverts.

A. R. KITSON

12 Hillside Terrace, Steyning, West Sussex

In *Gulls: a guide to identification* (1982), P. J. Grant did state: 'Exceptionally, underparts [of adult winter Black-headed Gull] have pink flush of varying strength, rarely intense.' So many gulls are now being dyed in various hues that we urge observers to view oddly coloured individuals with great caution. Eds

Barn Owl bringing down Kestrel At about 17.15 GMT on 30th October 1979, while I was driving along the B4437 between Woodstock and Charlbury, Oxfordshire, a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* flew powerfully and directly across the road at a height of about 2m. Immediately it passed over the hedge and over a field of winter wheat, a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* rose from the ground with an object the size of a vole (*Microtinae*) in its talons, directly into the owl's line of flight; at a height of about 2m, the owl struck and bound onto the falcon, forcing it to the ground. Owing to the traffic, I was unable to stop, but a search of the site the following morning produced no signs of the incident. The Kestrel must have been on the ground for at least one-and-a-half minutes, as I did not see it before it rose. The incident raises two questions. Had the owl seen the Kestrel drop on to prey and then come to investigate? This would perhaps account for the flight behaviour. Or was it coincidence that it flew over the Kestrel and then responded to it as it rose? If so, it would seem feasible that, under certain circumstances, Barn Owls will be stimulated to attack comparatively large species of birds.

J. M. CAMPBELL

Cruachan, Ascott-under-Wynchwood, Oxford

Derek Goodwin has drawn attention to the following, on a prodigy that foretold disaster, from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: 'A falcon, towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.'¹ Eds

Reactions of Blackbird to adder On 14th May 1979, at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, we observed a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* carrying its extended left wing in a drooping position and staggering clockwise in a large circle as if injured. After a few moments, we realised that the cause of this behaviour was a female adder *Vipera berus*, motionless in the middle of our lawn. Occasionally, the Blackbird would stop and half raise both wings, with bill open, staring at the adder about 1 m away; after a few seconds, it returned to the encircling behaviour, and staggered with both fluttering wings held slightly extended. The snake then moved, but the Blackbird continued to encircle it in a clockwise direction, wings still extended, and twice attempted to peck at its head; unperturbed, the snake quietly disappeared into the surrounding undergrowth and the Blackbird flew away. The whole sequence lasted about seven minutes, and, throughout, the Blackbird remained completely silent. The snake, when first observed, was about 4 m from the Blackbird's nest.

P. C. ROWORTH and J. M. ROWORTH
Moor Farm, Wellsyke Lane, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire

This observation is in contrast to that by J. M. Hyde published recently: 'Blackbird carrying grass snake' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 382). Eds

Nuthatch hovering From 11.30 to 12.00 GMT on 27th September 1979, in Morden Hall Park, London, I watched a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* flying to and fro across the river, over which there was a great number of aphids (Aphidae) from nearby large lime trees *Tilia*. The Nuthatch repeatedly swooped down from adjacent branches and hovered for three or four seconds, picking insects in mid air just above the outer spray of lime leaves.

IAN WARD
54 Daybrook Road, Merton Park, London SW19 3DH

Letter

The origin of 'twitcher' The word 'twitcher' has, over the last decade, gained widespread use, meaning a person who 'chases' rare birds. But what are its origins? I first heard the term from Bob Emmett at Beachy Head in 1968, when it was used to mean anyone who got 'twitchy' when southeast winds blew and headlands bristled with Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts. I believe that, along with other commonly and now internationally used birdwatching terms such as 'good value', 'dipped in', 'dipped out' and 'seen off', the legendary PG (Portsmouth Group) was responsible for bringing it onto the ornithological scene. Before the origins are forgotten, however, and before a plagiarist takes credit, could someone please enlighten us?

R. F. PORTER
7 Glebe Road, Perry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Requests

January 1983 'BB' If your subscription runs from January to December and, therefore, falls due on 1st January, and if you wish to ensure that your January issue arrives on time, *please resubscribe before the end of November*. (With the Christmas and New Year holidays, the labels for the January mailing are prepared in early December.)

We should also like to remind subscribers that (again due to the extended holiday period) the January issue is always despatched in mid January and not on the first Friday of the month as is the case with all the other issues through the year.

Winter atlasing The BTO/IWC Winter Atlas is about to start its second season. The first produced some interesting results, as the provisional map of the distribution of Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* shows (fig. 1). In 1981/82, Bramblings were widespread in small numbers over lowland Britain, with a few larger flocks in most areas; in northern England and southern Scotland, there were many more in the east than in the west; as expected, very few were found in Ireland.

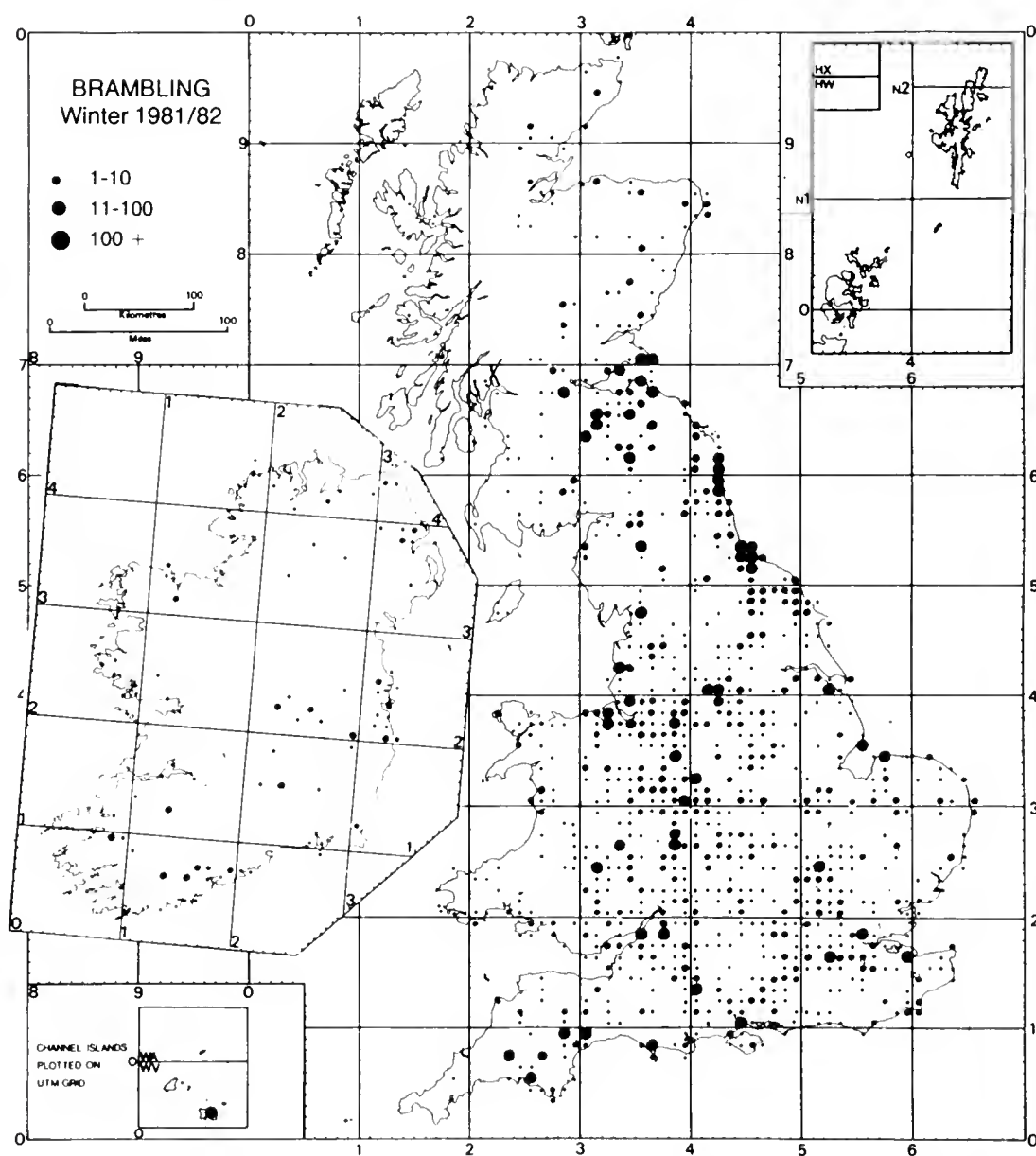


Fig. 1. Provisional map of distribution of Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* in Britain and Ireland during winter 1981/82 (drawn by Peter Lack)



Full details of how you can take part in this survey are available from Regional Organisers or direct from Dr Peter Lack, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR (a SAE would be appreciated).

Announcements

'BB' tour to Siberia and Mongolia Following the enjoyable trips to Israel in April 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 354-355) and to Thailand in February 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 231-232), we are now pleased to announce another joint 'Sunbird'/BB tour. So, if your mouth waters at the thought of birds such as Siberian Blue Robin, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Thrush, Eye-browed Thrush, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Lanceolated Warbler, Mongolian Lark, Altai Snowcock and Relict Gull . . .



The tour—from 25th May to 14th June 1983—will be led by David Fisher and, if there are at least 15 participants, it will also be accompanied by Peter Grant. 'Sunbird' has agreed to make a substantial donation to BB for every BB subscriber who books to go on this tour *and who requests at the time of booking that this donation should be made*. So far as we are aware, this is the only birding tour going to both Siberia and Mongolia in 1983 (those who have already done this trip rave about the Mongolian part of the expedition). Full details of the trip can be obtained from David Fisher, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.

'BWP' We have been informed by Oxford University Press that the prices of volumes I and II will be increased from £39.50 to £45.00 from 1st January 1983. Now is the time, therefore, if you do not already have volumes I and

II, to buy them, and also to order the forthcoming volume III (all can be obtained, post free in the UK and Eire, through 'British BirdShop', see page vii).

Special mystery photograph lecture Does any county society organiser need a lecturer to fill a gap in their programme of meetings this winter? Or to occupy a space in their 1983/84 winter programme?

We have a set of 50 mystery photograph colour slides (some easy, some difficult) and competition sheets for audience participation and will supply a champagne prize for the winner. We will try to arrange a suitable lecturer from among *BB* personalities (Editorial Board, Rarities Committee members, etc.) for any date or venue, provided that we are given sufficient warning and the set of slides is not being used elsewhere. We regret that we cannot give this lecture to small local groups: it is, of course, intended partly to be a promotional exercise for *BB* (free back copies will be available, for example), so we hope for large audiences. Please write to David Christie, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year and The Richard Richardson Award The rules for these two competitions will be the same in 1983 as in 1982 (see *Brit. Birds* 75: 42) except that the closing date will be earlier, on 14th March 1983, since the Society of Wildlife Artists' annual exhibition may be held as early as April rather than in July (the dates are not yet known). The judges in 1983 will be Robert Gillmor, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and the 1982 winner, Alan Harris.

News and comment

Bob Spencer and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Conference in Ireland The IWC and BTO have announced the programme of their one-day conference to be held at Clontarf, Dublin, on 27th November. The speakers include Stephen Baillie on European seabird ringing, Sean Fleming on the outstandingly successful first year of the Winter Atlas in Ireland, Gabriel Noonan on birds of prey in Wicklow, and Ian Bullock on the Irish Chough. Non-members will be welcome, and

enquiries should be directed to the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Southview, Church Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

Churchill Travelling Fellowships for 1983 About 100 of these fellowships are awarded annually and, because they offer such outstanding opportunities, the competition is fierce. Of the categories on offer in

1983 that of 'Natural history and conservation of local environment' seems ready-made for *BB* readers. If you have not sent in your application, you should act quickly, for time is now short: write for details to The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, London SW7 5PR.

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. This Convention, which came into force on 1st June 1982, has now been ratified by the United Kingdom. It was to meet the requirements of this Convention regarding the preservation of important natural habitats that certain sections were included in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. And, of that piece of legislation, it should be added that the important Part I (which deals particularly with licencing) is yet to be implemented. Rumour has it that the signatures of three VIPs are all that is lacking. If that is true, we are disillusioned. We thought that the present government was the great advocate of business efficiency.

The Nature Conservancy Council In the context of business efficiency, spare a sympathetic thought for the staff of the NCC. Despite a steadily increasing work load, the Council has reduced its staff from 650 to 550 during the past three years. This has been achieved, it seems, by a great deal of unpaid overtime by both scientific and administrative staff. As a reward for all this effort, the Council staff are faced with threats from their own Minister, Mr Michael Heseltine, of further cuts. Amongst the ideas apparently being floated are the privatisation of certain parts of the work and the replacement of some of the staff by unpaid volunteers. It is argued that the voluntary conservation bodies are thriving and well placed to shoulder some of the NCC's load. Frankly, we were under the impression that they had been supporting the NCC loyally for some considerable time.

Birdwatching in the Fens The East Anglia Tourist Board has come up with a new idea for autumn, winter and early spring short breaks: 'Fenland Fishing and Birdwatching Holidays'. Fourteen guest houses covering the whole of fenland are participating, and their proprietors will provide special concessionary permits for Welney and Peakirk, as well as information on other sites of interest to visiting birdwatchers. Prices quoted seem reasonably competitive.

Readers may be slightly amused by the tourist board's leaflet, which shows a Gannet being watched by a birdwatcher as it hovers close to two fishermen in a fenland setting! But don't be put off. If you fancy watching hordes of swans, Wigeons, Pintails, Gadwalls and so on this winter, the EATB does seem to have something to offer. Further details are available from East Anglia Tourist Board, 14 Museum Street, Ipswich IP1 1HU; tel. Ipswich (0473) 214211. (D.A.C.)

Supertwitch? Steve Turnbull writes of a fascinating quotation he discovered in an excellent article called 'A-birding in the Bronx' by Frank Graham Junior. Graham, recalling Roger Tory Peterson's early days as a birder, wrote 'He made patternistic sketches of the more difficult birds, indicating the diagnostic markings with little arrows, and took them into the field with him for his own use. These were the drawings that would turn birdwatching into a supersport.'

'Well, there you are', continues Steve. 'What is good enough for Roger 'Tory Peterson is good enough for me, just call me a supersportsman from now on. Surely the old fuddy duddies who insist on ornithology remaining an exact science with no place for the Porsche-driving supersportsman have had their argument knocked on the head. It does raise the question of course of what to call the supersportsmen who reach the magic 300 figure with their life lists: are they then to be called superstars? How will such stars be able to obtain further ticks whilst surrounded by the inevitable autograph hunters? The question of sponsorship will of course raise its ugly head, various of the obligatory Porsches parked at Minsmere and Leighton Moss with signs on them "Binoculars by Zeiss", "Jackets by Barbour". Frightening thought! And on a not entirely unrelated theme . . .

Gripped off by their wives The *East Anglian Daily Times* of 9th June records how two officials of the Suffolk Ornithologists Group (we shall be merciful and withhold their names) set off for a birdwatching holiday in Scotland. Shortly afterwards, the unthinkable happened. News reached them of the arrival of a White-crowned Black Wheatear at Kessingland in Suffolk. Without a moment's hesitation, they set off back, completing a 600-mile dash through the night, only to discover that the bird had gone. This in itself was tough enough to take, but there was more to it than that. The wives of

our two heroes are, in fact, not noted for their tireless dedication to ornithology: possibly the term 'twitcher-widows' might be more appropriate. Nevertheless, they knew where their duty lay. On hearing of the wheatear's presence, they promptly downed tools (or tea-towels) and joined the throng of twitchers, being themselves successful in catching a glimpse of the hallowed bird.

Oh the chagrin! Oh the shame! 'We are acutely embarrassed by this', said Mr G. 'Being gripped off is bad enough, but when it's done by a wife who has no interest in birds, it amounts to utter humiliation.'

Birds of former days Under this heading, an article in the *Hampshire Ornithological Society Newsletter* starts with the paragraph: 'It has been my good fortune to be lent part of a diary kept by a Hampshire lady from the end of last century to the 1930s, and though by no means a systematic or scientific account it nevertheless offers some fascinating glimpses of bird life over the years.'

The author of the article (Mrs J. Irvine, 4 Clarence Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO4 7AL) adds in an accompanying letter: 'Lists of birds seen are available for almost every area of England, Wales and Lowland Scotland. I will send as appropriate to any county recorders on receipt of a SAE.' A generous offer, and one which might well be worth taking up, to judge by the published notes dealing with such species as Wryneck, Gull Bunting, Nightjar and Marsh Harrier.

American birds in Europe 'A summary of banded North American Birds encountered in Europe': this is the title of a useful paper published in the *North American Bird Bander* vol. 6, no. 3. Essential reading for any student of transatlantic movements by birds. Two things concern us here. First, the paper includes separate tables of birds ringed in east Greenland and in west Greenland. Has Greenland become the 51st (or is it 52nd) state? In a historical political sense, its links have been, and remain, with Denmark. But perhaps we quibble: the information contained is useful. Then there is the word 'encounter'. A footnote reads 'The term "encounter" rather than "recovery" is used throughout the article in accordance with the Bird Banding Laboratory's preference.' So now we have encounters of the fourth kind. Will the term catch on in the Old World, we wonder?

Carlsberg Special Brood Under this punning headline comes a pleasant press

release from the Carlsberg Brewery Ltd, describing the roost of 2,000 Pied Wagtails at the Northampton brewery, and the valuable ringing effort there by Dave Francis, who happens to be a research chemist at the brewery. How nice that large concerns still have time for the details which help to make life interesting.

Gong for EMN The initials are instantly recognised as those of Max Nicholson: a latter-day Darwin, if judged by the impact of his thinking and writing these last 50 years. Now, in a most fitting gesture, he has been awarded the Gold Medal of the World Wildlife Fund. We are sure that *BB* readers will join us in saying 'Well done'.

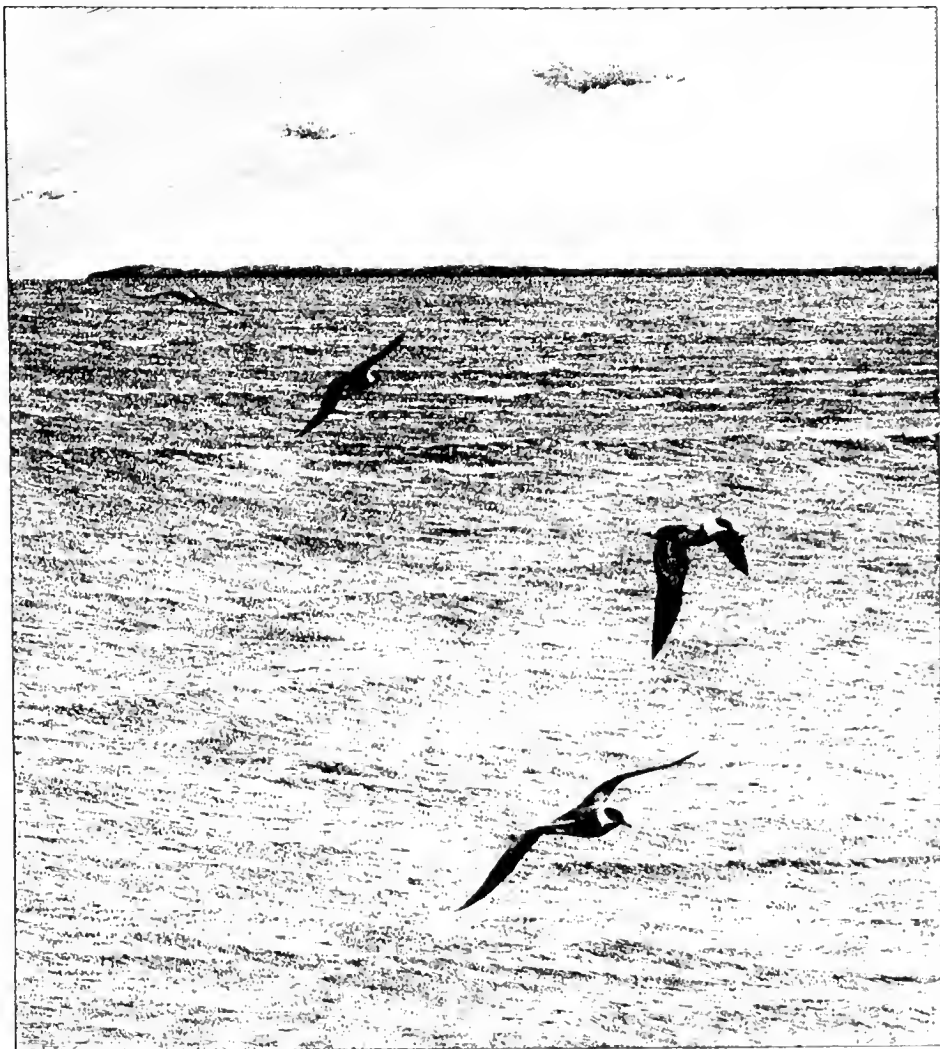
Conspiracy of openness With the air of one imparting a terrible and embarrassing secret, an *Observer* editor headlined news that the RSPB was poisoning gulls on some of its reserves. It was encouraging that thoughtful editorial writers in several papers responded promptly and sensibly, but the coup de grâce came from Ian Prestt himself, writing in *The Observer* the following week: 'The RSPB fully presented its case for poisoning small numbers of large gulls to help nesting terns in the members' magazine *Birds* some 10 years ago . . . At no time have we been reluctant to talk on this issue and indeed have given many interviews to Press reporters.'

As *The Observer* has an honourable record when it comes to supporting wildlife, we believe that they acted from the best of intentions. But they should research their stories properly.

'Sunbird' news We have recently learnt that 'Sunbird', with whom *BB* ran very successful tours to Israel and to Thailand, has been purchased by 'Wings Inc.', the American birdwatching tour company. During 1983, Wings/Sunbird will be operating a single joint programme of tours, open to participants from both sides of the Atlantic. Will Russell, joint author of the forthcoming *BB* feature 'The American scene', will be in general control of this programme, with David Fisher running the British side of the operation as Managing Director; the other two Directors, Bryan Bland and Peter Grant, are also both well known to *BB* readers.

The new Sunbird address is: David Fisher, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF.

Recent reports



R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to August unless stated otherwise.

A high pressure system to the south-west persisted for most of the month, with consequent west to northwest winds. Until 18th, warm air from this system gave generally hot weather, but Arctic air arrived thereafter, with northwesterlies bringing a drop in temperature and increasingly unsettled weather. As the high pressure declined on 26th, depressions made rapid eastward progress across the Atlantic, with striking results.

Seabirds

With information no longer supplied from Flamborough Head (Humberside), we are sadly unable to share the excitements of this premier seawatching point, but news of a late-summer sighting of a **Trinidad Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* is quite extraordinary: this petrel from the south Atlantic will, if accepted, be yet another new species for Britain and Ireland, and another wholly unexpected one; a rich reward indeed for the regular watchers at this prolific headland. **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* were

reported at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 13th and 26th. **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* included five at South Walney (Cumbria) on 8th, eight during the second week of the month at Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), with two there on 19th, and singles off Porthgwarra on 26th and the Brough of Birsay (Orkney) on 27th. Also off Cape Clear were up to half a dozen **Great Shearwaters** *P. gravis* per week; several were off Porthgwarra at the end of the month. After years with one **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* in Shetland, two have been seen this summer. In the second week of August, some 20,000 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobatas pelagicus* passed Cape Clear, confirming once again its supremacy over any other headland for this species. A **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* was at Cley (Norfolk) on 11th, but the terns provided more exciting records. An **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* was at Ballymacoda (Co. Cork) on 1st—the Greencastle (Co. Down) bird was last seen on 22nd July. Just over the Irish Sea, on Anglesey, a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* was claimed on 13th July: perhaps another addition to our list? **Caspian Terns** *S. caspia* were noted at Livermere (Suffolk) on 8th and at Staines (Surrey) on 11th. Single **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were found at Winterton (Norfolk) on 9th and Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 20th. **Marsh terns** *Chlidonias* were notably absent.



Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* were seen at Cley on 18th, at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 21st and on Fair Isle (Shetland), where one was present for much of July and on 13th.

Waders

Three more outstanding arrivals stretch the stock of superlatives this month. First came a **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* on Fair Isle from 11th to 13th: in summer plumage, thus avoiding the difficulties of identification usually attendant on claims of this species. Then there was a **Long-toed Stint** *C. subminuta* at Saltholme Pools, Teesmouth (Cleveland) from 28th to 1st September, likewise a potential new addition to the British list, subject to reviews of earlier claims. Finally, at Sker Point (Mid Glamorgan), from 30th into September, there was the least expected of all: a **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus*, from the far end of Siberia and a close relative of the magical Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis*; no-one seems to have predicted this one at all. It attracted a sudden rush of ridiculous and inaccurate newspaper features, and 1,000 or more observers travelled to see it. With the exception of a handful—the same three or four people who seem incapable of accepting a proper standard of behaviour despite the criticism and outright hostility from the rest to which they seem totally impervious—behaviour was good, and the organisation by the wardens excellent indeed. The bird thoroughly deserved its admirers. Other waders were hardly tame by comparison nevertheless. Best, perhaps, were a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* at Dungeness (Kent) from 1st to 6th and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *C. pusilla* at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) on 22nd. Other Nearctic waders included **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* at Portsmouth (Hampshire) in late July, South Walney from 2nd to 4th, Ferrybridge (Dorset) on 9th, Elmley (Kent) on 18th, Perry Oaks (Surrey) on 16th and Ballycotton (Co. Cork) and Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 21st. Also at Tacumshin on that date was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis*. **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* were found at Rosslare (Co. Wexford) on 14th and Tacumshin the next day, and a **dowitcher** *Limnodromus* at Ballycotton on 16th. A **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* was watched at Salthouse (Norfolk) from 22nd into September, and a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was in Scilly late in the month. **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus*



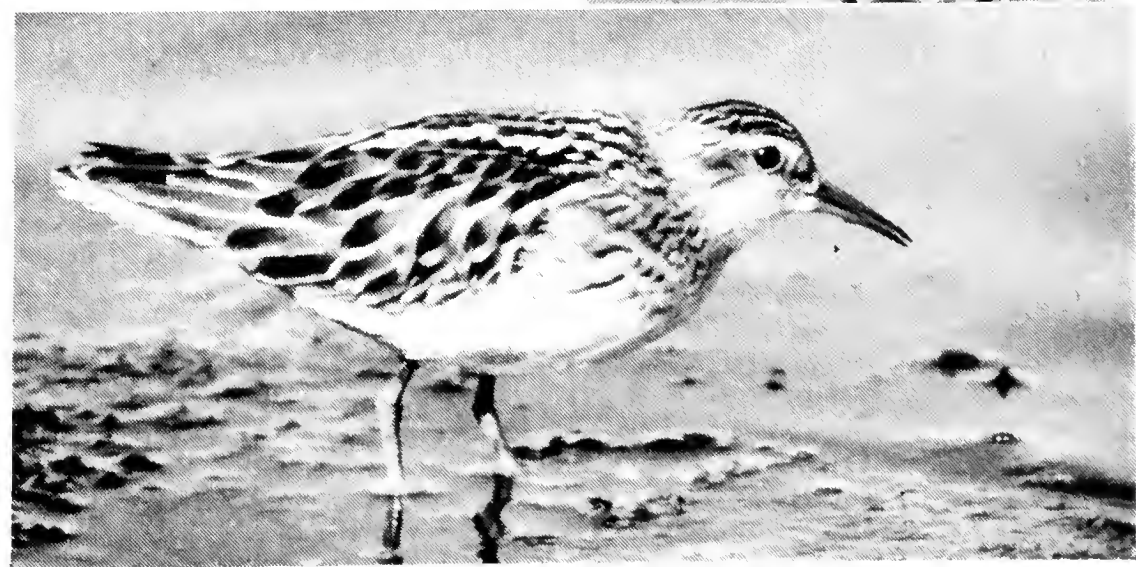
215. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*,
Cleveland, September 1982 (S. Roebuck)

tricolor were noted in Devon and at Connah's Quay (Clwyd) late in the month. A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* at Tacumshin from 7th to 13th was an Irish first.

Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola* showed well, including 15 at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 5th, and **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* totalled 67 at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 31st July and 109 at Abberton later. **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* were at Sandwich Bay on 29th July and Hengistbury Head (Dorset) on 11th.



216 & 217. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Cleveland, September 1982
(P. A. Doherty)



Heron-types

Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* haunted Oxwich (West Glamorgan) from July to September and one was on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) from 2nd to 5th. Oxwich also had a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* on 9th July. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was well-watched at Radipole Lake (Dorset) from 7th July. **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* included a long-stayer at Inchydoney (Co. Cork) from June into August and one at Horsey (Norfolk) from 26th to 30th. On 12th, Minsmere (Suffolk) attracted a **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*, a **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* and



two **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia*. A **White Stork** was also noted at Sizewell (Suffolk) on 14th, at Benacre (Suffolk) on 27th and 28th and at Minsmere again on 29th. Titchwell (Norfolk) had two regular **Spoonbills** which sometimes increased to three or four.

Birds of prey

A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* was seen on Jersey (Channel Islands) from 11th July into August. Odd records of **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* included one at Beeley Moor (Derbyshire) for much of June and July (an immature **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* summered in the same area), one at Lilymere Tarn (Cumbria) on 24th July and singles at Abberton from 26th to 29th and at Blythburgh (Suffolk) on 29th.

Near-passerines and passerines

Yet more amazing birds appeared from the west: a **Black-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* came, and predictably died, on 29th to St Agnes (Isles of Scilly); a **Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* at Saltash (Cornwall) also on 29th is yet another potential addition to the British list in this astounding month; and on 1st September a **Black-and-**

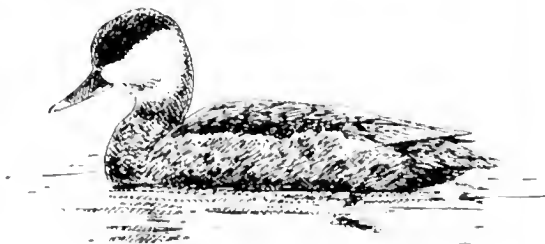
white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* killed itself against a window in Falmouth (Devon) and resisted all attempts to resuscitate it. From the east, a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was the earliest ever on Fair Isle from 13th to 15th. On 3rd July, an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on Fair Isle was the earliest by over a month, and another was there on 17th August. **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* included a singing male at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) from 5th to 8th July and the earliest ever juvenile there on 31st July. Others were in the Redcar-Hartlepool area (Cleveland) around 6th to 8th, at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 11th, on Fair Isle on 13th and at Spurn Point (Humberside) on 26th. **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* reached Dawlish (Devon) on 7th, Portland from 7th to 12th and South Walney on 27th. **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* were easterly as expected, between Flamborough Head, Gibraltar Point and Clew from 24th to 31st. There were **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) on 12th, Lodmoor (Dorset) on 18th and Wallerswick (Suffolk) on 20th. Single **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* were reported at South Walney on 19th and 27th. **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* graced Galway (Co. Galway) at the beginning of the month and Wyre (Orkney) on 31st and a **Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* was over Dungeness on 28th. **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* appeared on Fair Isle on 26th July and from 14th.

And a few ducks

Finally, a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was on Rutland Water (Leicestershire) in mid month, and **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* appeared on Abberton Reservoir and Alton Water (Suffolk) from 16th.

Latest news

Early October produced phenomenal numbers of **Pallas's Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus*, including ten on one day on Fair Isle, where there had previously been only three ever, and the total seems likely to exceed 60 on the British east coast alone.





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The North American scene

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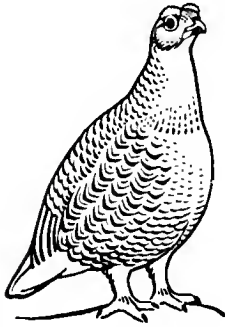
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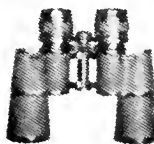
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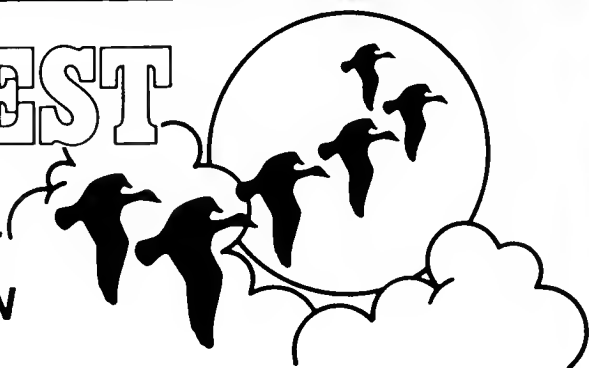
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Identifying Serins

D. J. Holman and S. C. Madge

From descriptions submitted to the Rarities Committee and some personal experience, it has become apparent that some records of Serins *Serinus serinus* have referred to escaped cagebirds of other *Serinus* species, and even to Siskins *Carduelis spinus*. The purpose of this short paper is to draw attention to the problem and to amplify the specific characters of Serin against those of some of the potentially confusable species.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw attention to all of the possible pitfall species: there are some 35 species in the genus *Serinus*, admittedly not all of which could be confused with Serin, and several species of the Neotropical genus *Sicalis*, two of which resemble Serin in plumage pattern.

Specific identification as Serin

A bird may be safely identified as Serin by a combination of features:

1. Appearance of small, dumpy finch with short bill and 'squat face'
2. Short and markedly cleft tail, lacking yellow bases to outer feathers
3. Brownish wings with dark feather centres and pale buffish tips to median and greater coverts, forming one or two wing-bars, and narrow pale edges to tertials in fresh plumage
4. Conspicuous clear bright yellow rump in all plumages (except juvenile, which has streaked rump lacking yellow; one of us (SCM) has seen such a juvenile as late as mid November in European Turkey)
5. Underparts streaked, at least along flanks, often heavily. Yellow not always present on underparts: if present, restricted to face and breast, with remainder whitish
6. Calls and song very useful, but obviously transcription always subjective; typical flight call is rather dry, rattling 'trillililit', and song is high, hissing, jingling, reminiscent in quality of songs of both Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. Other calls may be heard, however, and were discussed by Taylor (1980)

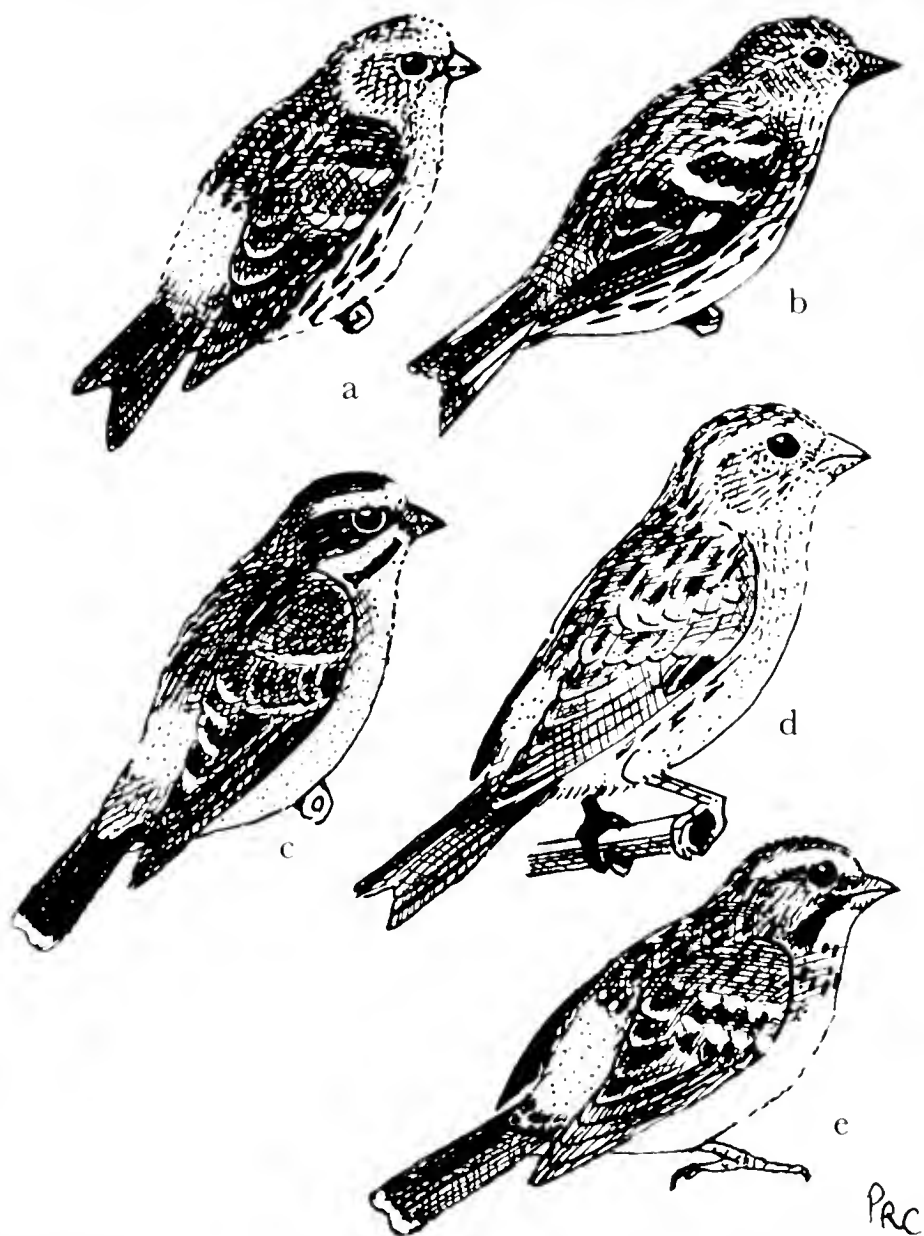


Fig. 1. Adult males of (a) Serin *Serinus serinus*, (b) Yellow-fronted Canary *S. mozambicus*, (c) Yellow-rumped Canary *S. atrogularis*, (d) Canary *S. canaria* and (e) juvenile Siskin *Carduelis spinus* (sketches by P. R. Colston)

Principal confusion species

The problem of escaped cage-bird species showing basic plumage features of Serin is rather complex. Perhaps the most frequent escapes are Yellow-fronted Canary *S. mozambicus* and Canary *S. canaria*, but other species may be involved in some of the claimed Serins which have been reviewed by the Rarities Committee.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* (plates 218 & 219)

Although adult male Siskins give no real problems, females and juveniles are considerably drabber and more streaked. Singles discovered feeding among parties of other finches, as often happens at coastal migration watch points or in gardens, may mislead the unwary. In all plumages, however, Siskins have yellow bases to the outer tail feathers, blacker wing-coverts, with prominent yellow bars, and a longer, slimmer bill. Most Siskin calls



218. Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Suffolk, March 1982 (J. D. Bakewell)



219. Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Netherlands, December 1970 (Hans Schouten)

are also very different from those of Serin, particularly the familiar, plaintive 'sooooo' uttered by flying Siskins.

CANARY *Serinus canaria*

Escaped Canaries, in plumages resembling the original wild type, cause perhaps the greatest confusion. Some can closely resemble Serin in plumage, but the Canary is longer-tailed, larger, with a relatively pinker bill, and generally has a more greyish caste to its plumage. The relatively unstreaked yellow of the underparts of the adult male has a greenish tinge and continues farther down onto belly or undertail-coverts, and is not so well-defined as on male Serins. The yellow of the rump is duller and



220. Female Serin *Serinus serinus* at nest, Portugal, June 1968 (R. G. Carlson)



221. Female Serin *Serinus serinus* at nest, Portugal, June 1968 (R. G. Carlson)

greener, not so well-defined as on Serin, and the fluty, twittering, rich warbling song is totally different.

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY OF GREEN SINGING FINCH *S. mozambicus* (plates 222 & 223)

This common cage-bird frequently escapes. Attention was originally drawn



222. Female Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*, Netherlands, October 1978 (Fred Hess)



223. Female Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*, Netherlands, October 1978 (Fred Hess)

to the possible confusion of this species with Serin by Goodwin (1956), but the problem still persists. It is a little larger than Serin, with a pale-tipped, square-ended tail (although tail can appear slightly notched when tightly closed). Males have the underparts unstreaked greenish-yellow down to undertail-coverts and a prominent head pattern, with yellow forehead and supercilium and dusky eye-stripe and moustachial stripe. Upperparts are relatively plain and only weakly streaked, with an ill-defined yellowish



224. Female Serin *Serinus serinus* at nest, Portugal, June 1968 (R. G. Carlson)

rump. Females are similar, but duller, and juveniles have weakly streaked underparts; the weak streaking, dull rump and square-ended tail are, however, still obvious features. The song is short and melodious, almost Canary-like, and the calls have been described as a melodious 'tseeu' (McLaughlin & Liversidge 1978) or a single or double 'tssp' (Williams 1980).

YELLOW-RUMPED CANARY OR SEEDEATER *S. atrogularis*

This frequently imported cage-bird is also known as the Black-throated Canary. It is dull grey-brown and whitish, with a clear yellow rump, the brown upperparts being well-streaked whereas the whitish underparts are prominently streaked only on the flanks of young birds. In northern races, the throat is mottled with dusky. This species is further distinguished from Serin by its rather larger size, more square-ended and pale-tipped tail, larger bill, and voice, the calls and song being reminiscent of the Yellow-fronted Canary.

OTHER SPECIES

Other *Serinus* similar to *mozambicus* which are imported include the Yellow Canary *S. flaviventris*, which is larger, with an even duller, greenish rump and cleft tail; Yellow-crowned Canary *S. canicollis*, which also has a cleft tail, but has golden-yellow crown, throat and breast, greenish rump, yellow

wing-bars and streaked upperparts; and the White-bellied Canary *S. dorso-striatus*, which is larger than *mozambicus*, with cleft tail, streaked upperparts and weakly streaked flanks, yellow throat and breast, and whitish belly and flanks. Females of all these species have hardly any yellow on rump, except *dorsostriatus*, which has yellowish on lower rump, but this species is a little larger than Serin, with a relatively longer tail and less streaked underparts.

STRIPE-TAILED YELLOW-FINCH *Sicalis citrina*

The Neotropical genus *Sicalis* has two species which superficially resemble Serin in plumage and size, others of the genus being larger or sufficiently different to cause little confusion. *S. citrina*, also known as Citrine Yellow-finch, has a slimmer bill than Serin, with tail only slightly notched and white on inner web of outermost tail feathers, best seen when bird is alighting with spread tail or on perched individual from below. The rump is yellowish-green and hardly bright enough to recall Serin, but the upperparts are streaked, except on the head, and the unstreaked underparts are yellow to the undertail-coverts. Females are streaked above, but, again, the underparts are yellowish to the tail.

GRASSLAND YELLOW-FINCH *S. luteola*

This second *Sicalis* is similar in structure and size to the last species, and also has hardly any yellowish on rump. It is distinguished from *citrina* by the lack of white in the tail, and streaked crown as well as upperparts, and from Serin most obviously by unstreaked underparts and, on females, by brownish flanks and breast.

Acknowledgments

We are particularly grateful for the advice given by Tim Inskipp when commenting on a draft of this paper, and to P. R. Colston for providing the illustrations. Thanks are also extended to the staff at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, for allowing access to skins.

Summary

The identification features of Serin *Serinus serinus* are emphasised and the pitfalls of confusion of this species in Britain with escaped cage-bird species are amplified. The identification of some of these species is compared with Serin, which may be identified safely by a combination of voice, structure (especially presence of cleft tail), amount of streaking in plumage above and below, extent of yellow on underparts, lack of yellow in tail and prominence of yellow rump.

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The North American scene

P. A. Buckley and William C. Russell

PAUL BUCKLEY is Chief Scientist for the US National Park Service's North Atlantic Region, Past President of the Colonial Waterbird Group, and Research Professor of Ecology at Rutgers University. A student of the ecology and behaviour of colonially breeding waterbirds, he has been a keen birder for the last 32 years, and a former Regional Editor for *American Birds*. His recent field experience includes visits to Pakistan, India and Nepal, as well as coastal Alaska. In mid 1982, his North American list was 'about 702'.

WILL RUSSELL is President of 'Wings', the American birdwatching tour organisation, which keeps him in touch with field ornithologists all over the US and takes him on birding trips all over the world. Author of several articles on bird identification and distribution, he has been Field Identification Editor of *Birding*, Consulting Editor for *American Birds*, and Lecturer in Ornithology at the College of the Atlantic. Deeply interested in Palearctic birds, he feels that a major achievement over the past decade has been the strengthening of contacts between American and British bird-watchers.

In 1979, Tim Sharrock asked us if we would collaborate on a column to be run in *British Birds* at irregular intervals, treating those items we ran across in our work in North America that would be of interest to *BB* readers. We agreed, despite some misgivings concerning our work-schedules; and, although we held several discussions between ourselves, and with Tim, we had 'initial inertia' that on several occasions seemed to doom the idea to a stillborn death. Nonetheless, we persisted, and, while our grand designs for a massive updating for *BB* readers of what has been happening in North America in, say, the last ten years proved daunting in the extreme, we have tried to backfill a bit. Our first effort follows, and we welcome comments and suggestions for future items. Reader enthusiasm and forbearance are appreciated. Please write to us at the address at the end of this feature, telling us your views.

Books Recent excitement has been caused by the appearance of the long-awaited 4th edition of Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*, the first edition of which started it all in 1934. The dust has settled a bit, and the reviews by knowledgeable folk are remarkably consistent. Some of the new plates are fine, some OK, and some a step backwards; the range maps in the rear are a firm plus and are generally accurate; depiction of exotics (parrots, etc.) left divided camps: some applauded showing what is likely to be encountered, others abhorred perceived tacit support for introductions. Virtually unanimously, reviewers deplored the loose use of 'immature' and 'winter' plumages, especially with waders, and the essential ignoring of the advances in field identification made since the 1947 edition, and especially in the last ten years in North America. Our personal advice is to buy up copies of that 3rd edition (1947) before they enter the realm of antiquarian books.

For those following the field guide scene closely, a revision of Robbins *et al.*'s *Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America* is in preparation. The National Geographic Society is planning a 'definitive' guide to North American birds, illustrating many plumages rarely shown (correctly), and they aim for December 1983 publication. Withal, it is our unswerving opinion that the *sine qua non* of North American field guides remains the three-volume set with text by Pough and plates by Eckelberry, the so-called 'Audubon Bird Guides', published by Doubleday in 1946 (eastern land-birds), 1951 (eastern water-birds) and 1957 (western land- and water-birds). The first two, reprinted several times, are readily available; the last has been out of print some years. But the plates of all three are nonpareil, and the last especially well illustrates some Alaskan/Siberian vagrants of interest to European readers.

Of quite a different sort is Robert H. Armstrong's *Guide to the Birds of Alaska* (1980; in paper only). It provides excellent colour photos of many Alaskan specialities and notably of Siberian strays and migrants not well depicted elsewhere or in easily obtainable books. Although some species of particular interest are illustrated in Armstrong only by variably useful colour paintings (among others, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* and Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*), this is counterbalanced by excellent colour photos of many others, including Yellow-billed Loon [White-billed Diver] *Gavia adamsii*, most of the Nearctic waders, all the auks (Alcidae), *Catharus* thrushes, Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, and Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*. The two painted plates are packed with additional vagrants including Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* and Grey Bunting *Emberiza variabilis*.

Yet another recent offering of great potential use to the keen *BB* reader is Roberson's *Rare Birds of the West Coast* (of North America). Patterned on the Sharrocks' two volumes on *Scarce Migrant Birds* and *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland*, it follows essentially the same format for Alaska to California with two significant additions: (1) extensive discussion of species/group identification (about which there has not always been reviewer agreement) and (2) some 11 colour plates commissioned for this work, plus one of colour photos taken *in situ* of such North American irregulars as juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, adult Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and adult Lesser Sand Plover. The painted plates range from not-at-all-bad, in the style of Barruel, to better-left-undone (plates 7 & 10). They depict many of the same species Armstrong does, some better, some worse, and the stint plate is reminiscent of D. I. M. Wallace's but not nearly so informative. The text is shot through with black-and-white photos, often of tiny size, some that were too poor for printing, and with a few where we truly could not discern, let alone identify, the bird. Notwithstanding, it is a useful book, a splendid introduction to rarities along the west coast of North America, many of which are likely in Britain and Ireland.

Alaska For about the last seven years, attention has been riveted each spring on the Alaskan 'out-islands': on Gambell, St Lawrence Island, only 45 miles (72 km) from Siberia; on St Paul in the Pribilofs (where a little-appreciated tradition of Asiatic bird occurrence goes back many years); and finally, in the last five or six years, on the far Aleutians, especially Attu, the last and only 210 miles (336 km) from the Commander Islands off the Kamchatka Peninsula. The list of Eurasian species has been impressive indeed (see Roberson's book), and 1981 was typical, although veteran Alaska hands termed it 'poor'. Notwithstanding, Gambell produced Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, Polynesian Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* and Ivory Pagophila *eburnea* and Slaty-backed Gulls *Larus schistisagus*; St Paul came in with a Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* standing alongside a Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*. But, even in an off year, Attu outshone them all, offering a spectacular variety including White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, 12 Palearctic wader species, Slaty-backed Gull, Skylark *Alda arvensis*, Olive-backed *Anthus hodgsoni* and Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Oriental Greenfinch *Carduelis sinica*, and many others. Perhaps of greatest interest is that Attu is the locus for that elusive and little-known wader, the Long-toed Stint: in 1981, which was typical in this regard, they were seen on 11 of 22 days, with a maximum of nine. The possibility of seeing truly rare waders such as Nordmann's (=Spotted) Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, and Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* (one occurred on nearby Buildir Island on 2nd June 1977) is uppermost in everyone's mind in spring on Attu, now recognised as one of the world's premier locales for wader enthusiasts. Other interesting Attu birds in the last few years: Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*, Falcated Teal *Anas falcata*, Steller's Sea

Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*, Kamchatka Gull *L. (canus) kamtchatchensis*, Grey-spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*, Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*, Siberian Rubythroat, Pechora Pipit, Grey Bunting and Pallas's Reed Bunting. Perusing Roberson's book will set even the most jaded observer off on trails of mental delectation.

Range extensions Whether the increase in records of Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* in North America and in Europe is related to the species' (sudden?) expansion of its breeding range is still unclear. Now unequivocally apparent, however, is that *the* place to see the species in its exquisite breeding plumage is Churchill, on the western shore of Hudson's Bay. In 1980, to everyone's astonishment, three pairs nested at Churchill, and, while several young hatched from all three nests, their ultimate productivity remains unknown as observers commendably avoided subsequent disturbance. In 1981 (the same?) three pairs again bred, although no nests were known to have been successful (perhaps due to egg-collectors: *Brit. Birds* 75: 187-188). Natural predation on tundra and taiga birds in this area is high, however, and some people have speculated that it was increased by the attention of those wishing to see the gulls. A scintillating colour photo of one of the incubating adults (alas, exhibiting no pink breast bloom) appeared on the cover of the November 1980 issue of *American Birds*, whose lead article reported on the 1980 nestings. This occurrence seems to have been presaged by likely breeding (confirmed only in 1976 and 1978) during 1974-78 on the Queen Elizabeth Islands, in northern Canada (see abstract in *Proc. 1978 Conf. Colon. Waterbird Grp* 2: 16), so the range expansion, if correct, has been underway for some time.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* moved northward as an Atlantic Coast breeder by almost 150 miles (240 km) in 1981, to Long Island, New York, following its southern congener, Gull-billed *Gelochelidon nilotica*, which made the same move in 1975. Royal *S. maxima* and Sandwich *S. sandvicensis*, each regularly breeding no farther north than the Maryland-Virginia border, have been behaving suspiciously in some Long Island colonies of Common Terns *S. hirundo* in the last few years, and may be next. Both now occur annually to at least Massachusetts, the former in small flocks, and both without benefit of tropical storms. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* has established a tentative toehold as an Atlantic-coast breeder in two locations in Massachusetts (Plum Island and Monomoy Island National Wildlife Refuges), and although summering adults have lately been seen south to Long Island and New Jersey, properly skulking about large wildlife refuges, no other sites are known. Thirty years ago, the species was a rare fall and an all-but-unknown spring migrant on the Atlantic coast.

Seabirds The gadfly-petrel *Pterodroma* spectacular discovered about ten years ago continues unabated off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, where one trip in October 1981 had over 40 Black-capped Petrels *P. hesitata*, some sitting on the water in large flocks of Audubon's Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri*. An apparently previously unreported field-mark is behavioural: Black-caps jump from calm water when flushed, like dabbling ducks, while most shearwaters we know lumber off, paddling like sea-ducks. Is this a useful generic distinction? Another recent report was of a flock numbering between 1,000 and 1,500, also in the Gulf Stream off the Carolinas, perhaps over half the species' total breeding population. In any event, European sea-watchers might consider factoring in Black-capped Petrel as a possible vagrant, restricted as it seems to be to Gulf Stream waters, where it has now been recorded as far north as near Nova Scotia. Cyclonic and anticyclonic eddies regularly pinch off from Stream waters, taking with them flora and avifauna typical of the main stream, proximity to which is thus not essential for occurrence of Black-cap, Audubon's, and Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, the three species that seem to typify blue waters north of the tropics in the western Atlantic.

Pterodroma petrels are causing a major stir in California as well. In late 1979, an oceanographic research vessel reported Cook's Petrel *P. cookii* from a seamount about 100 miles (160 km) off central-southern California. Immediately chartered pelagic trips confirmed their occurrence there in small numbers in late fall and early winter, and on at least one trip another species was recorded: Stejneger's Petrel *P. longirostris*. In the spring of 1981, several birds identified as Solander's Petrel *P. solandri* were reported well offshore of northern California and several hundred more were seen off Washington last summer. Icing the cake, a dead Murphy's Petrel *P. ultima* was washed ashore in northern California recently. These are in addition to what was previously the only *Pterodroma* off the Pacific Coast, Scaled or Mottled

P. inexpectata, which, unexpectedly, has also occurred recently in the Gulf Stream off the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

While on the topic of pelagics, we offer the opinion that the sessile habits of British and Irish seabird enthusiasts may be drastically reducing their data input. It is so well known as to be axiomatic in North America that (with a very, very few cases on the Pacific coast where submarine canyons run virtually up to shore) one normally does not see other than the occasional pelagic seabird unless one goes well offshore (100 or more miles (160 km) is not uncommon). It is tempting to imagine what lies at sea off, say, Cape Clear, and how bathymetry and submarine peaks, plateaux and troughs affect pelagic bird concentrations. Here is one major area where, we believe, Europeans lag far behind their American colleagues.

Vagrants One of the few adult Sharp-tailed Sandpipers recorded anywhere in North America outside Alaska, and one of only a handful of that species ever from the Atlantic Coast, was seen at Jamaica Bay, Long Island, for almost a week in late July 1981, followed closely by a going-out-of-breeding-plumage Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* at Plum Island, Massachusetts, and a one-shot Polynesian Tattler in inland California (the first ever away from Alaska). A banner year for Asiatic shorebirds seemed in the offing, but, except for one or two west coast Red-necked Stints and Bermuda's first Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, that was the whole show. Plum Island came through again in late September when a visiting Dane found New England's first Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, seen and heard only briefly for one day. This was reminiscent of eastern North America's first Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, captured emaciated in April 1981 on Martha's Vineyard, off Cape Cod, and seen on only two days.

Taxonomy A recent review in *Continental Birdlife* of the Pied Wagtail complex summarised from available published sources, some of them in the always-obscure Russian literature, interactions between *Molacilla (alba) lugens*, the black-backed form of the Kamchatka Peninsula and a bit farther south, and the northeastern Siberian *M. alba ocularis*. The notable contributions of the paper are three-fold: it calls attention to distinguishing features between *lugens* and *ocularis* (aside from the black v. grey backs, respectively); it summarises North American records (both have occurred, supported by specimens or photos, south to California); and it reveals that the Russians find them behaving as full species in a zone of sympatry on the northeast coast of Kamchatka. Indeed, the forthcoming 6th edition of the *AOU Check-list of North American Birds*, to be published in 1983, treats *lugens* as a full species: Black-backed Wagtail.

Information continues to accumulate, slowly and sometimes contradictorily, on the two forms of the Western Grebe (illustrated, to his credit, by Peterson in his new *Eastern Field Guide*). Apparently overlapping broadly in the US, and behaving as full species where sympatric, they are nonetheless reported to be 'hybridising' at one location in Mexico. If true, this would be another, rare example of a 'broken ring', requiring a difficult decision as to the proper taxonomic treatment. Evidence at present favours splitting them off as Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* and Clark's Grebe *A. clarkii*, assuming the Mexican situation to represent a recent secondary contact where the isolating mechanisms have not yet sorted themselves out. No new taxa names are required, as *clarkii* was described over 100 years ago; after it was summarily lumped with *occidentalis* it seems almost everyone forgot why it was recognised in the first place. A paper in the latest issue of *Western Birds* (12: 41-46) discusses field separation of the two forms, and offers two splendid black-and-white photos clearly contrasting them. *Plus ça change . . .*

Endangered species It has been known for a while that Europe's Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* (most of which are in the British Isles) are in trouble. The other half of the North Atlantic population, centred in the Cape Cod-Long Island area, had been thought to be quite healthy. A paper just published in *Colonial Waterbirds*, the new journal of the Colonial Waterbird Group (established, of course, in the Colonies), points out, however, that not only is the North American Roseate population in very bad shape, but also, like Europe's, it seems to be suffering on its wintering grounds (in this case, northeastern South America). But, *contra* Europe's, our decline, previously unrecognised, goes back at least to the early 1930s, has been continuing at a relatively constant rate up to the late 1970s, and regression analysis predicts the species' complete extirpation—if the present trend is not abated—shortly after the year 2000. How many more species will turn out to be adequately protected on their north

temperate zone breeding grounds while they are quietly being eliminated from the face of the earth in the tropical winter?

Extirpated by pesticides as a breeding species from east of the Rocky Mountains in the US non-Arctic Canada, the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* is now making a slow comeback—both naturally and assisted by the restocking efforts of Tom Cade at Cornell, and others. Most exciting was the appearance in 1980 of a pair at a former eyrie in an unnamed location in Maine, where they raised several young. It is not altogether certain, but it seems that at least one and perhaps both members of the pair were not ringed. If true, this would be a natural recolonisation, although one or both birds could have lost rings, or could have been raised by released pairs that have nested successfully in the last few years along the mid to north Atlantic coastal area. Alas, they did not return in 1981.

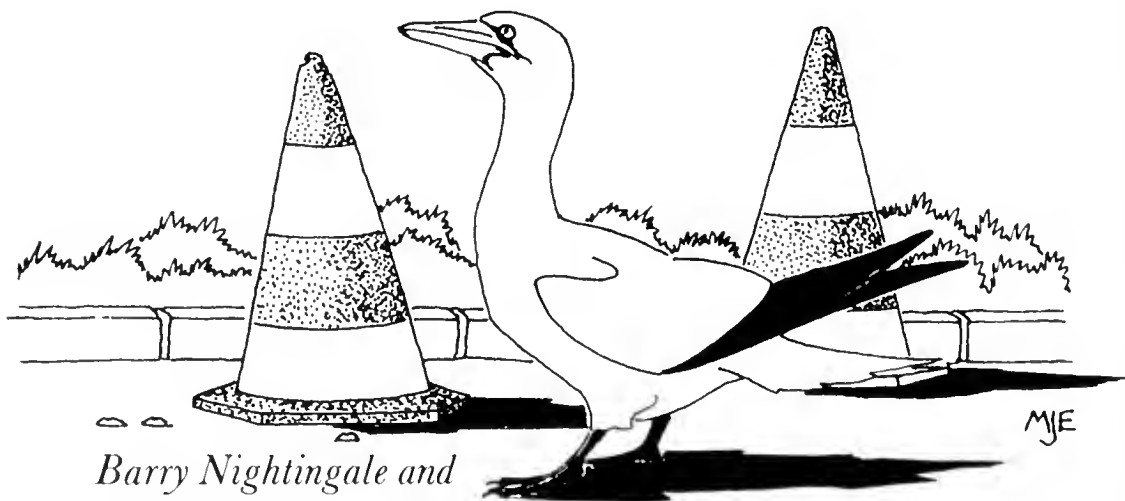
Previews The 6th edition of the AOU *Check-list of American Birds*, now covering down to and throughout the West Indies and Central America, but omitting all subspecies, is expected out in time for the AOU Centennial Meeting in New York City in September 1983.

What is expected to be state-of-the-art in stint identification is the paper by Richard Viet now approaching final draft stage. To be published in *American Birds*, it will feature commissioned colour plates by Lars Jonsson, as well as top-calibre colour and black-and-white photographs of all species. Complete age, sexual and plumage features will also be provided for all species.

Identification Recently published in *American Birds* (35: 778-788) is a paper by Ben King on North American pipits, illustrated with full-page colour plates each by Peter Hayman and Peiter Prall. This important contribution even illustrates worn plumages, and provides an excellent summary table of diagnostic features. It seems a pity that it did not include Richard's *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Upland *A. sylvanus*, Blyth's *A. godlewskii*, Tawny *A. campestris*, Berthelot's *A. berthelotii*, Long-billed *A. similis* and Rosy *A. roseatus*, as then it would have covered the entire Northern Hemisphere.

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Seabirds inland in Britain in late April 1981



Barry Nightingale and
J. T. R. Sharrock

Following overnight northeasterly gales on 25th/26th April 1981, many seabirds were reported inland in Britain. The most frequent species

were Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* (717), Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* (580), Gannets *Sula bassana* (57), Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* (44), Little Gulls *Larus minutus* (24) and Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* (17). Some of these occurred in unprecedented numbers, and several other species which are unusual inland were reported.

This summary records what turned out to be a fairly typical seabird 'wreck', but which was, nevertheless, most striking in some areas of central and southern England, and rearranged some of the local record books.

Method

Appeals were made directly to all county recorders in Britain and a request was placed in *British Birds* (74: 304) for information on any seabirds seen more than 2 km from the coast during 24th–30th April 1981. The response was excellent, both from recorders—records (or a negative return) were received from every county or regional recorder in Britain, except for Dumfries & Galloway, Durham and Wiltshire—and from individual observers; so much so, in fact, that care had to be taken to avoid duplication. Numbers quoted in this paper refer to the minima at each locality; duplication due to individuals moving from one locality to another could, however, not be estimated.

Progress of the 'wreck'

After a period of light winds and clear skies, as Britain lay between Atlantic and Scandinavian 'lows', during 23rd–24th April, the Atlantic depression (1000 mb) moved east and then remained almost stationary over south-eastern England, the English Channel and northern France until 12.00 GMT on 27th April. From noon on 25th to 00.00 GMT on 27th, the wind was northeasterly from the North Sea onto the central part of the east coast of England (fig. 1). An associated intense weather front, marking the boundary between very cold Arctic air to the north and a warm Continental air-mass, also remained stationary from central southern England across the North Sea and into the Low Countries, bringing unseasonal snow and sleet. The gale-force northeasterly winds along the front were strongest on the night of 25th/26th, when a speed of 40 knots was recorded on the Norfolk coast.

Almost no seabirds were reported inland on Friday 24th April (one Fulmar and one Arctic Tern). On 25th, however, there were 19 records involving 112 individuals. Interestingly, this was the biggest skua day, with all three common species; the other seabirds were 103 Arctic Terns, two Kittiwakes and a Sandwich Tern. This, however, gave no real warning of what was to happen on the following day.

After the overnight blizzards and gale-force northeasterly winds, Sunday 26th April produced 65 records of seabirds inland, involving 763 individuals of ten species. The commonest were Kittiwakes (508) and Arctic Terns (202), but the most striking were perhaps the eight records of Gannets (14 individuals), nine Fulmars and three petrels, two identified as Leach's *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Although one species reached an even higher total the next day (there were 37 Gannets on 27th), 26th was clearly the

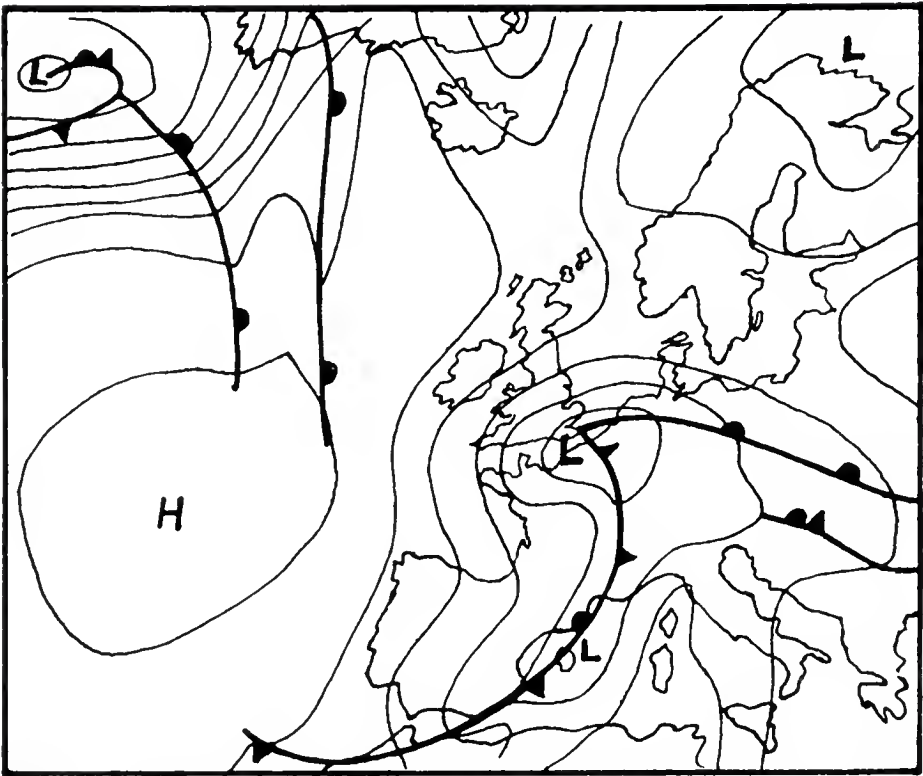


Fig. 1. Meteorological situation in eastern Atlantic and western Europe at 00.00 GMT (midnight) on 25th/26th April 1981

peak of the movement, especially since observers were rather caught unawares on 26th, but were fully mobilised by Monday 27th after news of the day's events spread on the grapevine late on 26th. The tale is now told under the separate species headings.

Species accounts

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (fig. 2)

A pelagic species, coming to land only to breed, the Fulmar is well suited with its impressive powers of flight to cope with severe weather conditions. Indeed, it is rarely seen inland, but has been the victim of some impressive wrecks, such as those in February to April 1962 (Pashby & Cudworth 1969). They are present in the Atlantic and North Sea areas all year, returning to the breeding colonies in late winter. A heavy movement occurs off the east coast of Britain from early March to early May.

The first report during the period came from Dorchester Gravel-pits (Oxfordshire) with a single on 24th April, but by 26th others had been reported from Purls Bridge (Cambridgeshire), Ditchford Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire), Draycote Reservoir (Warwickshire), Biggleswade (Bedfordshire), and in the west, at Chew Valley Lake (Avon).

Gannet *Sula bassana* (fig. 3)

Essentially maritime, the Gannet is rarely affected by storms. Adults are found in the eastern Atlantic and North Sea throughout the year. Immatures overwinter farther south, but return on a wide front in spring. There was a distinctly eastern bias to the records, particularly those found on 26th April, with sightings from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire.

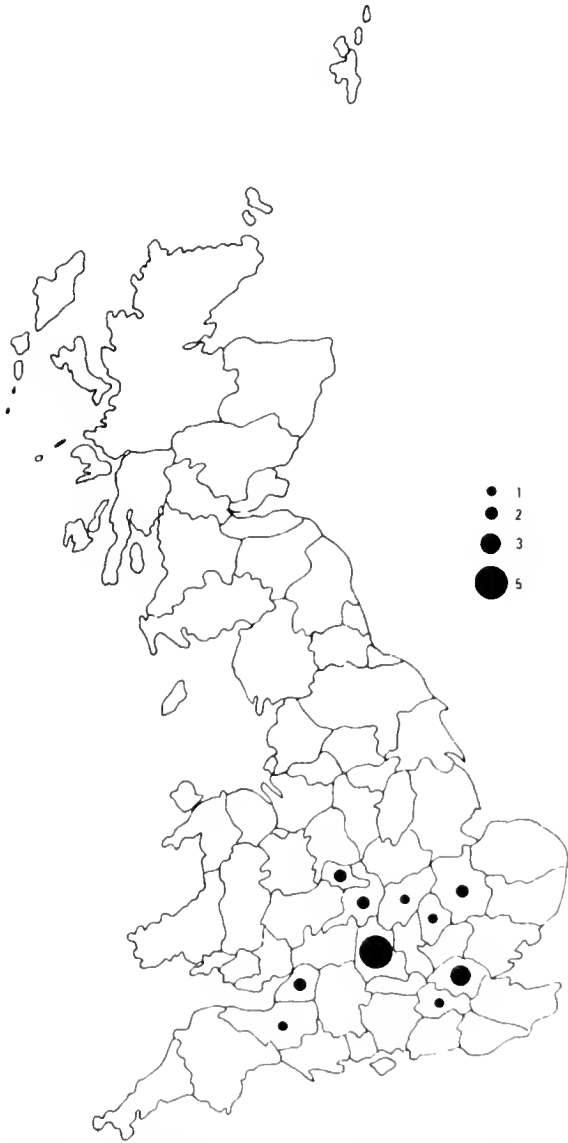


Fig. 2. Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

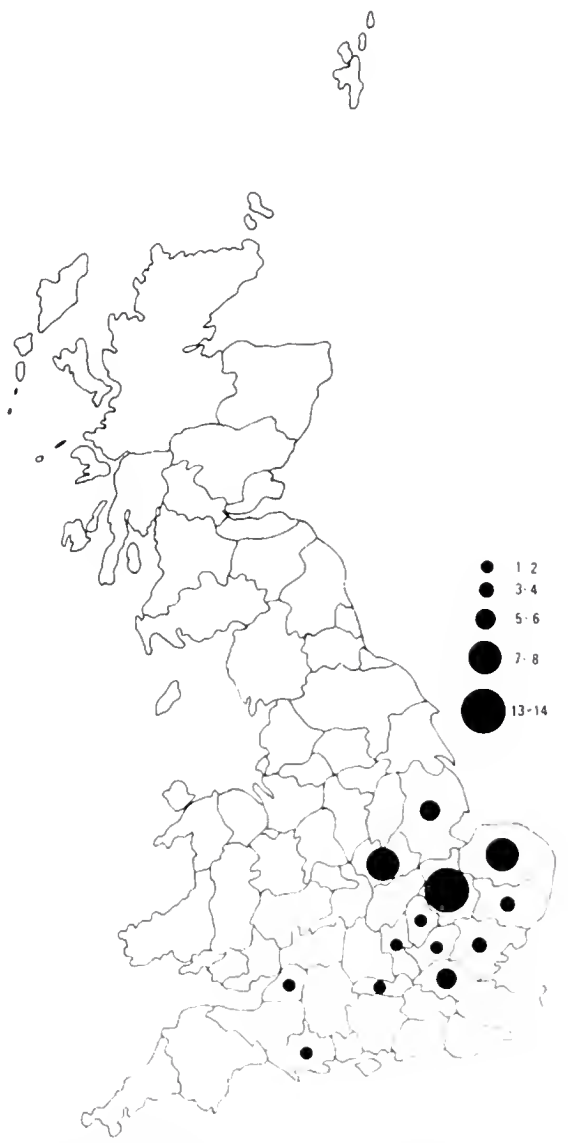


Fig. 3. Gannet *Sula bassana*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

This was perhaps the most spectacular of the species involved, with some 57 individuals. The farthest inland was one at Woughton (Buckinghamshire) on 27th April, 110km from the nearest open sea. Many were in a poor condition when found, and at least nine are known to have died, despite attempts to feed some of them artificially. Of those that were aged, 11 were adults and eight were immatures or sub-adults. A total of 14 was found on 26th April, with another 37 the following day.

Whilst all inland Gannets present an unusual sight, four on 27th April flying along the A604 in Cambridgeshire low over fields were, according to the correspondent, 'an astounding sight', as must have been five flying southwest over the Ouse Washes on 26th, and one east of Bishops Stortford (Hertfordshire) on 27th as it circled over the M11 motorway. One motorway Gannet was treated as a hazard by the local police and 'fenced off' with traffic cones (hence the heading drawing for this paper).

On a local basis, many of the records were significant: in Berkshire, the Gannet is a rare vagrant with less than ten county records up to 1980, yet

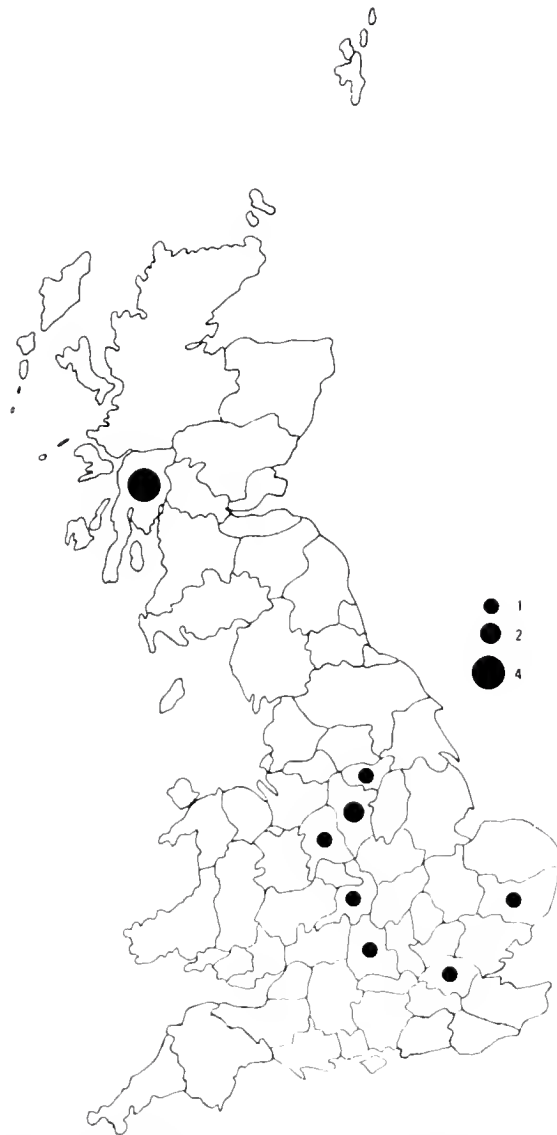


Fig. 4. Skuas *Stercorarius*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

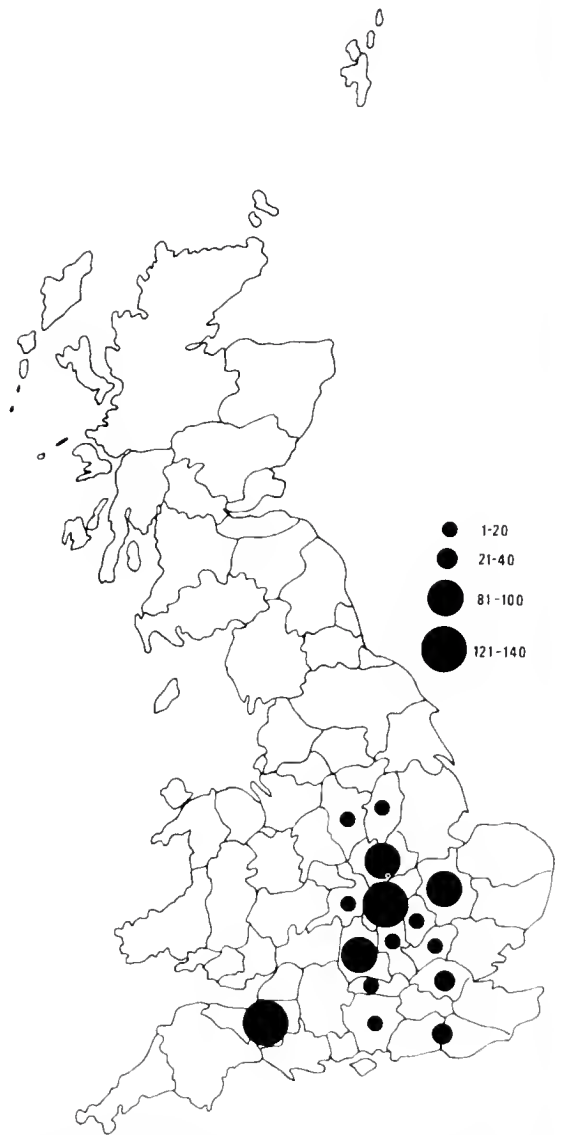


Fig. 5. Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

two were seen in the period in question; two in Bedfordshire were the first since 1955; and in Cambridgeshire, where the species is described as very scarce, there were 13.

Skuas *Stercorarius* (fig. 4)

Apart from the breeding season, when Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* in particular breed up to 30km from the sea, these species are all maritime. Great Skuas *S. skua* return to their nesting areas in early April, whereas Arctic Skuas arrive later, in May. Spring passage off the East Anglian coast is at best only irregular, and most previous storm-movements have been in autumn.

All three common skuas were reported during the review period, with the first ones noted on 25th, a day earlier than most of the other seabirds. On this day, a skua, possibly Arctic, was seen at Staines Reservoir (Surrey), a Pomarine *S. pomarinus* at Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire), only the third county record, an Arctic at the same location, a Great at Draycote Reservoir, an Arctic at Chasewater (Staffordshire) and an Arctic at Thrybergh

Reservoir (South Yorkshire). The only new skua on 26th (the big day for other species) was an Arctic at Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire). There was then none until four over Loch Lomond (Dunbartonshire) on 29th; these, however, were perhaps quite unrelated to the inland arrivals farther south. The last non-coastal skua was a Great inland from Minsmere (Suffolk) on 29th. Two records on the River Severn estuary have been omitted from the map on the grounds that they were not inland: two Arctics in Gwent on 27th were regarded locally as 'not very remarkable', but a Great upriver from the New Grounds (Gloucestershire) on 30th was only the fifth county record this century and the first in spring (it was the only seabird reported to us for that date). Totals of 11 Arctic, three Great and one Pomarine were positively identified during the period.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (fig. 5)

This is a maritime surface-feeder, nesting exclusively on the coast. Recently, a pattern of regular spring overland migration has been set, apparently independent of severe weather conditions. Such was the suddenness of arrival during the period in question, however, and in some cases in unprecedented numbers, that it was clearly not part of a regular movement. Curiously, no records were received from the east coast counties; apart from 130 in Somerset, records were restricted to the south coast and midland counties.

A feature of the Kittiwake movement was that most parties moved straight through; inevitably some duplication must have occurred. Where noted, 25-30% were immatures. There were only three prior to the main passage from 26th, with a few stragglers staying on until the end of the month. Some of the totals were exceptional, with 85 at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) and possibly as many as 300 at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire), 80 at Cheddar Reservoir (Somerset) and up to 100 at Farmoor Reservoir. Elsewhere, five together at Theale Gravel-pits was a record for Berkshire.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* (fig. 6)

In the southern half of England, most of the nesting colonies are situated on the coasts of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. Only a few occasionally visit inland waters on passage, rarely in more than single figures.

A scatter of records occurred during 25th-29th April (and a single at Theale Gravel-pits on 23rd). In Cambridgeshire, where the species is scarce, singles were seen on the Ouse Washes, at Gamlingay and at Cottenham, whilst at Peakirk a flock of 14 occurred.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* (fig. 7)

Although previously considered in some areas to be only an irregular visitor inland, the Arctic Tern is now established as a regular inland migrant in some numbers. Whether this is due to a genuine increase in records or observers becoming more aware of the possibilities of separating this species from Common *S. hirundo* is not certain.

Whilst much of the movement was not unusual, some of the numbers were higher than is normally expected. At Grafham Water (Cambridge-

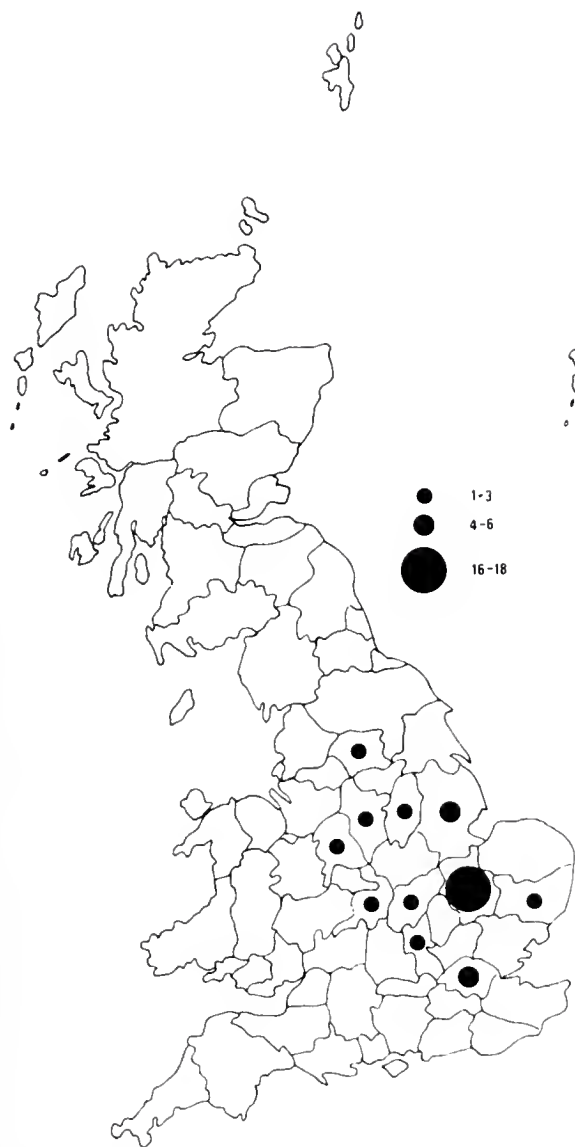


Fig. 6. Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

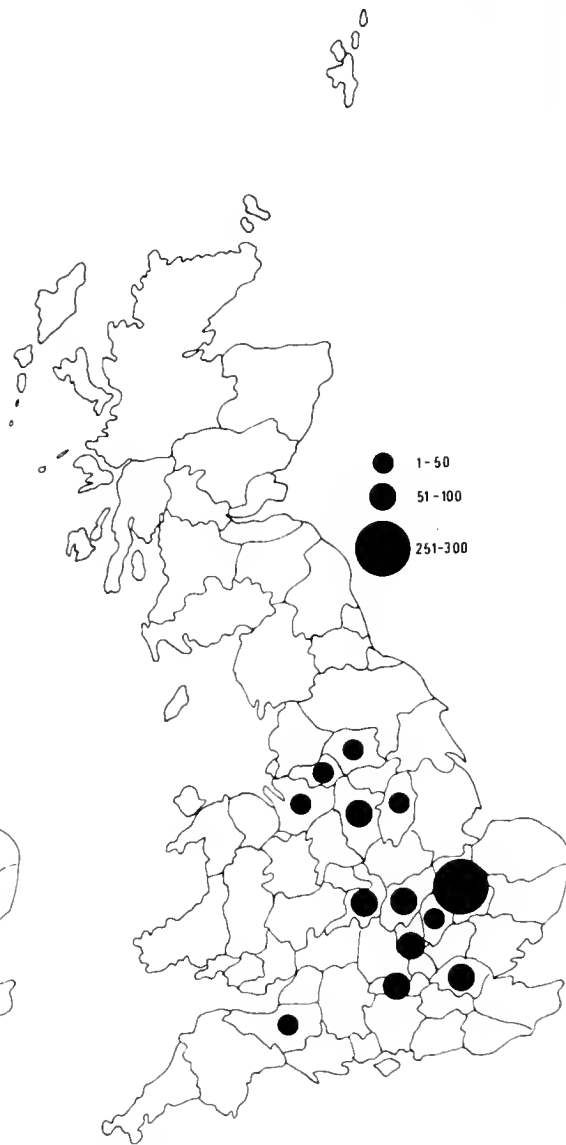


Fig. 7. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*: distribution by counties of inland records during 24th-30th April 1981

shire), 150-200 were exceptional on 28th April, and there were 52 at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) on the same day. There were 103 on 25th (the main skua day), but the peak numbers were on 26th (202) and 28th (289).

Other species

Two Leach's Petrels were reported in the period, singles at King George V Reservoir (Essex) and at Grafham Water, both on 26th April. Another petrel, either this species or Madeiran *O. castro*, was seen at Blunham Gravel-pits (Bedfordshire) on the same day.

Also turning up at this time were other species which are unusual inland, including a Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* at Purls Bridge on 28th, single Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* at the same locality, Staines Reservoir and Willen Lake on 26th, five Red-breasted Mergansers *Mergus serrator*, six Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* (including individuals at Staines Reservoir, the Ouse Washes, and Pitsford Reservoir), a few Little Gulls *Larus minutus* from 26th to 29th (nine, three, one and 11), a Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

at Staines Reservoir from 26th April, and ten Scaups *Aythya marila* at Dorchester Gravel-pits, again on 26th.

Passerines were also grounded by the severe weather as far apart as Morecambe Bay (Cumbria), with an unusual fall of finches *Carduelis*, wagtails *Motacilla* and Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe*, and East Anglia, with Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* and other thrushes dominant, but these all fall outside the scope of this paper.

Table 1. Timing of seabirds inland in Britain during 24th-30th April 1981

‘Seabirds’ includes the following species: Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Leach’s Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Gannet *Sula bassana*, Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*, Great Skua *S. skua*, Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* and Little Tern *S. albifrons*

	APRIL						
	F	S	S	M	T	W	T
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Number of species (max. 12)	2	6	10	6	6	7	0
Number of records	2	19	65	62	12	19	0
Number of individuals	2	112	763	143	296	142	0

Discussion

The geographical distribution of the inland seabird occurrences during 25th-29th April is similar, though not identical, for all species: a wedge of counties extending from the Wash in the north to Berkshire and London in the south, with some in East Anglia and a few farther north. The weather situation, together with this distribution pattern of records, suggests that the origin of the seabirds was the North Sea and that they probably entered the Wash and crossed the Fens inland towards the central Midlands and northern Home Counties. Skuas and a few terns came first, perhaps during the day on 25th, but most were swept inland during the night of 25th/26th. Weakened Gannets continued to be discovered during 27th, while further discoveries of terns and Kittiwakes may have involved movements from one water to another rather than new arrivals.

This concentrated wreck was spectacular so far as the inland observers were concerned, even though it was on a rather small scale by coastal seawatchers’ standards. The Gannets and Fulmars, in particular, provided some unexpected sights; as one example, a correspondent, travelling by sea from Harwich to Germany on 27th had a very quiet crossing, with nothing at all out of the ordinary, yet had met with four Gannets and a Sandwich Tern during his cross-country drive to Harwich. On the other hand, it should be noted that not a single shearwater *Puffinus* or auk (Alcidae) was reported in this influx. They, perhaps, were already established in their breeding areas by late April, this influx involving a mixture of migrants moving northwards and long-ranging feeding parties, and non-breeders, all diverted westwards in the strong winds and poor visibility of the unseasonal blizzards.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to Keith Allsopp for his helpful comments on our analysis of the weather situation. The records summarised in this paper were supplied by the following correspondents, of whom we were often envious when we heard what they had seen, and to whom we now express our sincere thanks: J. D. Aldridge, T. P. Appleton, K. Atkin, D. Barker, D. F. Billett, R. Birch, C. Booth, T. A. Box, K. Brockie, F. C. Buckle, E. D. Cameron, J. M. Campbell, P. Chadwick, P. Clement, J. Cloyne, M. R. Coates, C. J. Coe, D. R. Collins, W. A. J. Cunningham, Dr P. J. Dare, P. E. Davis, R. H. Dennis, A. Dobbs, P. A. Doherty, J. B. Dunnett, N. Elkins, P. W. Ellicott, M. Everett, M. Finnemore, R. Frost, H. Galbraith, I. Gibson, M. J. P. Gregory, H. Grenfell, G. R. Harrison, A. Heavisides, Dr C. J. Henty, R. H. Hogg, S. H. Holliday, J. Howard, M. Hutcheson, M. Jones, G. I. Kelly, R. Key, C. A. E. Kirtland, P. G. Lansdown, J. A. McGeoch, D. Moore, K. E. Moore, R. Murray, A. J. O'Neill, A. Paine, M. J. Palmer, Dr I. D. Pennie, R. K. Pollock, K. Preston, D. Proctor, J. Redshaw, N. J. Riddiford, A. Roadhouse, D. H. V. Roberts, M. J. Rogers, J. D. Sanders, A. J. Smith, R. W. J. Smith, P. Standley, B. Taggart, D. W. Taylor, R. J. Tulloch, Dr W. A. Venables, Mrs P. M. Vizard, J. Wheatley, P. A. Whittington, J. D. Wilson, C. Wright, J. F. Wright, R. E. Youngman and B. Zonfrillo.

Summary

Northeasterly gales and blizzards during 25th-28th (especially the night of 25th/26th) April 1981 brought an influx of seabirds to the Midlands and central southern England (see table 1). The origin was presumably the North Sea, with arrival often via the Wash.

Reference

PASHBY, B. A., & CUDWORTH, J. 1969. The Fulmar 'wreck' of 1962. *Brit. Birds* 62: 97-109.

Barry Nightingale, 9 Duck End Lane, Maulden, Bedford MK45 2DL
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Personalities

28 Peter Holden

When, in 1965, the Junior Bird Recorders' Club became the Young Ornithologists' Club, Peter Holden was among the 2,000 of its members who were transferred. He was soon to make his mark on the new organisation, and ten years later had become its National Organiser. Since then he has seen it grow to an impressive membership of over 100,000 young people.

Peter has been interested in birds from a very early age. He is a keen observer of behaviour, and more likely than most to know the identity of that obscure brown feather that is being passed around. This latter ability stems from a penchant for bits and pieces. Any dead specimen has its skull, wings, feet and most of its feathers removed, stored and catalogued in what seems like only seconds, a process which has proved too much for some, weaker, stomachs. Pride of place goes to a Short-eared Owl's head, whose mummified and shrunken brain rattles inside like a maraca.

Much of his pleasure in birds has always been in getting to know a local study area and its birds particularly well, an approach which he continually advocates to young ornithologists. He is the archetypal non-twitcher. Recently, the editor of this journal and I spirited the senior Young Ornithologist of the Year away from a reception to the local gravel-pit where there was a Red-necked Grebe and a Ring-necked Duck (and also, as it turned out, a Ferruginous Duck). Peter was not too pleased. Not that the reception was like *Hamlet* without the ghost, so much as that the ghost had been watching rare birds! The serious point behind this, of course, is his desire to steer young birdwatchers first to a real appreciation of the commoner birds, and away from a too-early emphasis on rarities.

The energy and drive which he brings to his work are remarkable. The ideas keep coming. Soon after his appointment to the RSPB, as assistant to the Education Officer, he started his own local YOC group, and this he still somehow makes the time to run. Promoting the YOC has involved over 100 TV and Radio interviews to date. The books he has edited or written are always ones for which he sees a genuine need, for instance the best-selling *Spotters' Guide to Birds*, and now, jointly with JTRS, *The RSPB Book of British Birds*, a genuine beginners' book, with no Black Woodpecker or Crested Lark.

His other interests lean to the historical (he was in fact employed briefly by two leading genealogists), and to classical music. He is a valued member of his local Church community.

Unlike most of the subjects of this series, not only does Peter wear a tie, but he is actually well, indeed nattily, dressed. ('Best Dressed BB

225. Peter Holden with YOC members, Bedfordshire, 1980 (Akroyd/YOC)



Personality'?) It is significant that it occurs to hardly anyone to call him 'Pete'. On the subject of names, there do seem to be a lot of other Peter Holdens. You sense that he rather wishes they were called something else, especially the 'Mr Holden' who advertises a well-known brand of thermal underwear.

If I have made Peter sound rather a serious character, it is perhaps that that is one's first impression. But I must correct it. There is great humour there, particularly a sense of the incongruous, which can make him cry with laughter. To illustrate, an Australian teacher had taken his boys on a gruelling fortnight's canoeing expedition. There was to be a prize for the boy who on top of this submitted the best bird list. The master had come to England, from Australia, to buy the boy's prize—a YOC pencil! Peter almost did himself the proverbial mischief.

The YOC, with its excellent magazine *Bird Life*, and wide-ranging activities, now stands in high regard. Through it, hundreds of thousands of youngsters have discovered the excitement and pleasure to be found in wild birds. This type of educational work is not a sphere most birders meet with or even consider much. But, make no mistake, its influence on attitudes for the future will be profound. The dedicated work of people like Peter (and here one must mention over 500 purely voluntary leaders) is about the long-term interests of birds, and creating a future generation which will be able to press for the effective conservation of the things that we all value.

GEOFFREY ABBOTT

POSTSCRIPT Just before the copy date for this profile, Peter's wife Sue gave birth to a fine baby boy, Andrew. Clearly, Peter is leaving no potential source of new YOC members untapped.

European news

Records have been supplied by correspondents in 20 countries for this twelfth six-monthly report on interesting occurrences and status changes in Europe. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* FAEROE ISLANDS Sörvágs Fjöoður on 7th June 1982.
SWITZERLAND Eschenz from 29th January to 5th February 1982*.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* NORWAY Increasing: in extreme southwest (Rogaland), where breeding first confirmed in 1968, now increased to over 50 pairs.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* BELGIUM First and second records: dead

singles on coast on 28th November 1981* and 6th February 1982*.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* HUNGARY Breeding population about 560 pairs in three heron colonies.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* ITALY Potential breeder: present near Ravenna since spring 1980.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* FRANCE Increasing: 3,500-4,000 pairs in 1981 (+60%

compared with 1974). **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 4,780 pairs in 52 colonies. **SWEDEN** Eighth and ninth records: Scania on 29th-30th May 1981* and Gotska Sandön on 2nd June 1981*.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* **FRANCE** Pair bred near Toulouse in 1981. **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 235 pairs in 26 colonies.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* **GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC** First record: eastern race at Heidenfeld/Unterfranken from 8th August to 6th September 1980*, but probably an escape, so unlikely to be admitted to German list.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* **FRANCE** Increasing: 2,300 pairs in 1981 (+23% compared with 1974). **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 400 pairs in 33 colonies.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* **AUSTRIA** Breeding counts: from aerial survey, 150-180 pairs in one large and six small colonies in Neusiedler-See in 1981 (last aerial survey, in 1960, showed 200+ pairs). **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 330 pairs in 27 colonies. **SWITZERLAND** Fanel-Cudrefin from 2nd January to 24th February 1982.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* **FRANCE** Increasing: about 10,000 pairs in 1981 (+170% compared with 1974). **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 1,620 pairs in 63 colonies.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 835 pairs in 46 colonies.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* **GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC** First record: Baden-Württemberg on 23rd-30th August 1981*, probably an escape.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* **HUNGARY** Breeding population: only one pair.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* **AUSTRIA** Breeding counts: from aerial survey, 100-130 pairs in one large and one small colony, mixed with Great White Egrets, in Neusiedler-See in 1981 (last aerial survey, in 1960, showed 180 pairs). **FRANCE** Two pairs bred at Grand-Lieu Lake, Loire-Atlantique, in 1981. **HUNGARY** Breeding population: about 460 pairs in 18 colonies.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* **FINLAND** First breeding record: pair on rocky islet in Gulf of Finland hatched five and reared one young; total of 26 records, probably mostly of escaped or introduced birds, though never introduced in Finland itself.

Geese *Anser/Branta* **DENMARK** Low wintering numbers: census on 16th-17th January 1982

showed only 3,000 Bean Geese *A. fabialis*, 530 Canada Geese *B. canadensis* and one Barnacle Goose *B. leucopsis*.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* **ESTONIAN SSR** First summer record and nesting: pair on small island in Väinameri, Moonsund: five eggs, five chicks hatched, four fledged; one additional adult in vicinity, 3rd June to 4th August 1981.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* **NETHERLANDS** Eighth record of *B. b. nigricans*: Scharendijke, Zeeland, in February 1982.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* **FINLAND** Migrants: of 13 records, 11 since 1973, nine in flocks of black geese *Branta* migrating northeast to ENE in late May.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* **SWITZERLAND** Reports of free-flying birds continue, but source unknown.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* **SWITZERLAND** Spring influx: over 200 reports by early May 1982.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* **FRANCE** Eleventh record: male in Loire-Atlantique in mid May 1982. **SWITZERLAND** Male at Pfäffiker Lake during 17th-30th August.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* **FRANCE** First record: male killed in Baie de Somme in May 1980, probably an escape.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* **FRANCE** First for 17 years: immature killed in Baie de Somme on 17th September 1981.

Pochard *Aythya ferina* **NORWAY** First proved breeding: lake in Akershus in 1976, now increased to about 15 pairs at same lake.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* **FRANCE** One or two every winter since 1977. **SWITZERLAND** Geneva on 6th and 23rd January 1982*.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* **FAEROE ISLANDS** Female paired to male Eider *S. mollissima* in Toftavatu on 7th September 1981.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* **NORWAY** Male paired to female Eider *S. mollissima* on Töst, Lofoten, in summer 1982.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* **DENMARK** Hard-weather movement: 200,000 passed west at Rubjerg, N-Jutland, during January 1982.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* **NETHERLANDS** Fourth record: male at Texel on 10th April 1982* was the first since 1966.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* **FRANCE** Small influx: several in northwest during 19th-23rd January 1982. **SWITZERLAND** Near

Prangins from 27th December 1981 to 2nd January 1982* and in Häftli on 10th February 1982* (wanderers from Britain?).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* POLAND Female or immature at Jastarnia, on Baltic coast, on 9th November 1980.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* BELGIUM Breeding: regular since 1980 in extreme south, with at least two pairs successful in 1982*.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* DENMARK Breeding pair during 1979-80 (first since 1961), but no success owing to thin-shelled eggs. FINLAND Slowly increasing: average of 13 young fledged annually during 1977-80, 18 in 1981 and 19 in 1982.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* FRANCE Reintroduction success: several released at end of winter 1981/82 in Cevennes, and one pair reared one young in 1982.

Black Vulture *Aegyptius monachus* BULGARIA Three on carcass in eastern Rhodope Mountains on 11th August 1982.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus* SWEDEN Twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth records: Scania on 30th August 1981*, and Falsterbo on 17th September 1981*.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* DENMARK Largest-ever passage: on 16th May 1982, 70 at Skagen, N-Jutland, and 22 at Rørvig, Zealand.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* FRANCE Eighth 20th-century record: male near Paris on 25th March 1981.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* FRANCE Total of 130-140 pairs bred in Lorraine in 1981.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo* DENMARK Largest-ever passage: 31,285 at Stigsnaes, Zealand, during autumn 1981 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 75: 269).

Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* SWEDEN Eighth and ninth records: sub-adult at Ottenby on 17th August 1981*, and one at Falsterbo on 29th August 1981*.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* FINLAND First record: second-year near Helsinki during 13th-15th May 1982*. SWEDEN Fifth and sixth records: juvenile in Scania from 29th July to 23rd August* and, probably the same, at Falsterbo on 24th August 1981*, and adult in Scania on 20th June 1981*.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* PORTUGAL New pair in north in summer 1982.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* SWEDEN Sixth record: Fyledalen, Scania, in July 1982. SWITZERLAND Rheindelta on 27th November 1981.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* HUNGARY Total of 280 records during 1973-81, with most (84%) over fish-ponds; 89 in April, 68 in September, none in June.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* SWEDEN Sixth record: adult male in Öland on 3rd June 1981*.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* PORTUGAL Probably breeding in north in 1982.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* DENMARK 'Rather heavy influx' in early June 1982.

Crane *Grus grus* SWITZERLAND Winter records: one overwintered; also 41 at Laufen during 13th-17th December 1981 and on 24th January 1982, and 32 at Fully on 20th December 1981.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* BULGARIA Ten near Pomorie, Bourgas, on 10th August 1982.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* AUSTRIA Best breeding success in recent years: seven females with chicks in Hansag reserve, Burgenland. NETHERLANDS Small influx: at least 14, including two colour-ringed in the German Democratic Republic, during January-March 1982.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* SWITZERLAND Nuolen on 16th May 1982.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* SWEDEN Eighth record: Löddea and Foteriken, Scania, from 16th July to 31st August 1982.

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* SWEDEN Fourth record: Falsterbo on 20th September 1981*.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta on 2nd April 1982. SWITZERLAND Rheindelta on 2nd April 1982 (same as in Austria).

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* FRANCE Fifth record: first-winter on Ile d'Oléron, Charente-Maritime, on 10th February 1982.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* FINLAND Second record: Vaasa, Gulf of Bothnia, during 13th-18th May 1982 (first was in August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 261).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First record: caught in southern Moravia on 2nd September 1981. SWEDEN First record: Scania on 1st September 1981*.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* FINLAND Eleventh and twelfth records: during 3rd-6th June 1981 and on 22nd May 1982* (note that both are in spring/summer). MALTA First record: May 1982.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Summer record: Bavaria from 16th May to 24th June 1978*.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* FRANCE Tenth record: north Brittany on 8th January 1982.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* SWEDEN Eighteenth to twenty-first records: 3rd May 1980*, 17th May 1981*, 1st-2nd June 1981* and 18th June 1981* (cf. first breeding in Finland in 1978).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* LATVIAN SSR Third record: July 1982, at same site as previous two. SWEDEN Thirty-second record: 12th August 1981*.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* FINLAND First record: near Oulu in early June 1982*.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* SWEDEN Second breeding record: pair in Blekinge in 1980*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* AT SEA Faerobanken, 100 km southeast of Tórshavn, Faeroe Islands, on 26th June 1976. FRANCE Second and third records: second-winters in Canche Bay, Somme, on 1st February 1981 and near Lyon 21st-22nd January 1982. SWEDEN Third record: Lake Mälaren, Asköviken, for three weeks from 22nd May 1982.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* POLAND Fifth record: immature at Opole on River Odra, Silesia, on 19th December 1981, was also first one deep inland.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* FRANCE Third and fourth records: adult in Charente-Maritime on 22nd March 1982 and immature with a sub-adult in Finistère on 15th April 1982.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* BELGIUM Yellow-legged race (or species) *L. (a.) cachinnans* occurring in increasing numbers on coast in late summer: up to 530 in 1980.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* HUNGARY Fourteenth record: Hortobágy on 18th November 1979.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* FINLAND Second record: Vaasa, Gulf of Bothnia, during 10th-11th July 1982, in breeding plumage (as was first in June 1973). SWEDEN Second record: Lake Mälaren, Asköviken, on 22nd-23rd May 1982.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* FRANCE Tenth record: Bourgneuf Bay, Vendée, on 12th September 1981.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* NETHERLANDS Large numbers: about 55,000 in IJsselmeer area in August 1981 and again in August

1982 (cf. 80,000-90,000 in August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* BELGIUM Third record: first live example on 7th December 1981*.

Little Auk *Alle alle* NORWAY Up to five pairs probably breeding on island in Finnmark in 1981 and 1982.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* NETHERLANDS Ninth record: second-year in Overijssel on 18th March 1982.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* BELGIUM First breeding for 70 years: two pairs successful in 1982*.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* SWEDEN In 1982, a 'lemming year', 50 pairs bred in various parts of mountains of Lapland, but fewer pairs present and fewer nestlings surviving than in 1978 (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 584); Hawk Owls *Surnia ulula* and Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* also locally very numerous.

Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* SWEDEN See Snowy Owl.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* AUSTRIA Number of observations increasing in southern Carinthia.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* SWEDEN See Snowy Owl.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* FRANCE Pair bred in Var in 1981.

Swift *Apus apus* SWEDEN Thousands dying in Stockholm archipelago in July 1982 apparently of exhaustion (or starvation) in low-pressure weather.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* SWEDEN Second and third records: Scania on 22nd September 1981* and at Falsterbo on 24th September 1981* (first was in August 1980).

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* DENMARK Low numbers: at Zealand, not over eight in any year during 1978-81, compared with 40 in 1975.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* FRANCE Two pairs bred in Normandy in 1980.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* FAEROE ISLANDS Tórshavn on about 1st May.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* SWEDEN First record: Haparenda Sandskär, Norrbotten, on 24th May 1982.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* FRANCE Increasing numbers of singing males in Beauce in spring 1982. GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Spring record: Bavaria on 14th April 1982. SWEDEN Spring/summer records: Gotland on 22nd May, two in Blekinge in late May, and one in Lapland mountains on 12th

June. SWITZERLAND Two near Claro on 4th May 1982*.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Decline in breeding numbers in eastern Franconia, northeast Bavaria.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* DENMARK Decreasing during 1970s: now only one site with ten to 15 pairs; in early 1970s, three or four sites with eight to ten pairs.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* FINLAND Fourth record: near Helsinki on 30th May 1982. SWEDEN Fifteenth and sixteenth records: two on 17th May 1981* and one on 3rd June 1981*.

House Martin *Delichon urbica* MALTA Second breeding record: two pairs in 1982, as in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 28).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* FINLAND First midsummer record: male near Helsinki on 5th July 1982 (nineteenth record). SWEDEN Sixteenth to twentieth records: 3rd-6th September 1981*, 12th September 1981*, 13th September 1981*, 19th September 1981* and 1st June 1982*.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* DENMARK Still expanding: five new breeding pairs in N-Jutland in 1982. NORWAY Has increased and now nests in most counties, even, since 1973, in Finnmark in extreme north (cf. range expansion in Sweden *Brit. Birds* 73: 577).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* AUSTRIA Small influx: flocks of up to 400 in eastern Austria from December 1981 to March 1982 (cf. small irruptions into Bulgaria, Denmark and Faeroe Islands in 1981/82, *Brit. Birds* 75: 270).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* BELGIUM First record: caught at De Panne on 28th August 1980 (second was in May 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28). NORWAY Still increasing: 28 at 17 localities in Vest-Agder alone in summer 1981, and now regular in Hedmark and Oppland, north of Oslo (cf. *Brit. Birds* 70: 348-349).

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* FINLAND Sixth record: near Oulu on 20th May 1981* (first record was in 1971).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* CZECHOSLOVAKIA White-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* proved breeding in Bohemia: four singing males and fledglings being fed by adults in 1982 (first observed in 1980); red-spotted race *L. s. svecica* has bred since 1978 in Krkonoše mountains (cf. *Brit. Birds* 72: 592).

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FINLAND First midsummer records: 5th-20th July 1981*

and in June 1982*, both males with characters of eastern races *maura/stejnegeri*. First record of European race: female showing characters of *rubicola/hibernans* on 22nd March 1982.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* SWEDEN First record: juvenile at Gräsgård, Öland, on 18th-19th October 1980 (cf. records in Finland, Norway and Britain during 1977-79, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* MALTA First breeding record: 1982.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* FRANCE Male near Seine Reservoir, Aube, on 7th January 1982.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC First Bavarian record: Ammersee on 20th September 1981*.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* DENMARK Breeding numbers lower in 1982 than in 1981 (which was a good year), but passage numbers still increasing.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* FINLAND Third record: near Helsinki on 25th July (previous ones were in June 1980 and June 1981).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* FAEROE ISLANDS Male singing in Hválvík on 20th June 1982.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* NORWAY Spreading north and west: nine singing on Hamerøy, Nordland, in June 1981 and one singing in Finnmark in July 1981; 'Should be a good candidate for becoming established in Britain, e.g. in birch woods in eastern Scotland.'

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* FINLAND Fourth and fifth records: male at Rönnskär bird-station on 28th May 1981, and male at Lågskär bird-station on 26th May 1982*. SWITZERLAND Male in Bolle di Magadino on 24th April 1982*.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* FINLAND Fourth record: Kemiö on 16th October 1981. MALTA Fourth record: April 1982. SWEDEN Fifth record: male singing on islet in Stockholm archipelago on about 20th May 1982.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* POLAND Second nesting deep inland: nest with young at Białowieża on 25th June 1982 (first was family party seen in Białowieża Forest); cf. 1978 observations (*Brit. Birds* 71: 586).

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* ESTONIAN SSR Third to fifth records: three ringed at Kabli, Pärnu district, on 23rd

October 1980 and on 15th and 16th October 1981. POLAND Bukowo Lake near Koszalin on 30th September 1980, and first one inland, at Kórnik on 21st October 1981.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* ESTONIAN SSR Ninth to eleventh records: three ringed at Kabli, Pärnu district, on 17th September, 2nd and 10th October 1981 (most since 1975). SWEDEN Spring record: Hoburgen, Gotland, on 17th May 1982 (rare in spring).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* SWEDEN Seventh record: trapped at Svenska Högarna on 16th October 1981* (cf. fourth Finnish and third and fourth Dutch records in October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 271).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* SWEDEN Second record: trapped in Östergötland on 3rd October 1981* (cf. eighth and ninth Finnish records in October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 271).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* SWITZERLAND Singing male at Bergen from 16th May to 20th June.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* FRANCE First record: male mistnetted at Barcaggio, Corsica, on 14th April 1980.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus* POLAND First for some years: Goczalkowice Lake, south of Katowice, on 3rd December 1977, two near Ketrzyn, Olsztyn, on 18th March 1981 and three or four in centre of Wrocław on 25th February 1982.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* NETHERLANDS Breeding: nesting in 1982 in same tree in Friesland as in 1981; small flocks of juveniles indicated breeding in two other places. SWEDEN Beginning to spread outside Scania: bred in Öland and Östergötland in 1982. SWITZERLAND Strong passage: 52 observations between late March and early April 1982; only one in May. (Cf. recent increases in Finland, France, German Federal Republic and the Netherlands, *Brit. Birds* 75: 271.)

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Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* POLAND First record: immature at mouth of River Vistula on 8th September 1981*. SWEDEN Deletion: bird at Gräsgård, Öland, on 18th-19th October 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 29) was Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, not Isabelline Shrike.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* SWITZERLAND Colonies of 188 at Basle and 58 at Lus continue to hold the majority of the Swiss population.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* SWEDEN Närke on 10th July 1981*.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* SWITZERLAND Low winter numbers: 'not common' in 1981/82: three largest flocks were 5,000, 3,000 and 2,000.

Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella* POLAND Second record: three adult males near Bolestawiec, Lower Silesia, on 18th August 1981.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Westward spread apparently continuing: male summered in Marburg, central Hessen, in 1980 and 1982; breeding not yet confirmed. NORWAY Still increasing and spreading north, mostly along river valleys and in marshy areas. (Cf. range expansions in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Switzerland and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 75: 29.)

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* POLAND Third record: male at Zielona Gora on 11th December 1981.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* ESTONIAN SSR Fourth to sixth records: male near Tallinn and two males in Kohtla-Järve district, all in May 1981.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* FINLAND Second record: male at Hanko on 29th May 1982 (first was in August 1980). SWEDEN Seventh record: female at Ottenby, Öland, on 30th May 1982.

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No information was supplied from Albania, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Iceland, Luxemburg, Romania, Spain or Yugoslavia.

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. Eds

Bushnell Explorer 10 × 50 binocular

It is unlikely that anyone would treat a binocular more harshly, and thus would give it a more thorough test, than a keen birder. It will be out in all weathers, knocked against gates, rocks and dry-stone walls, regularly covered in sand or coated in mud, and probably at least once a year dunked in water. Most important of all, however, its optical performance will come under constant and demanding scrutiny.

Pick up a 'Bushnell Explorer' 10 × 50 and its feel and look at once give confidence that it will stand up to such rigours. Its construction is chunky and solid (it weighs a rather heavy 1.04kg), with single-piece body, and the objective-lens surround is sensibly rubber-armoured: it has the look of a real birder's glass. A minor quibble is that the lanyard attachment-points seem to be placed too far forward, so that the binocular does not hang snugly against the chest.

Optical performance is very good, and it is difficult to discern much difference from two other well-known (and three-times-more-expensive) makes. Field of view at 1,000m is a good 132m, but, even with the rubber eyecups rolled down, the spectacle-wearer's field of view is cut by about

15%: I preferred to use the binocular with my spectacles raised, thus maintaining the full field of view.

An innovation which will be new to most of us is the 'Insta-focus' system, worked with a see-saw action focus-bar, rather than the conventional knurled wheel. Certainly, it is quicker, focusing in a split-second from infinity to the closest focal length. The latter, however, is a rather long 6.5 m. It takes some while to become practised at the very fine adjustments needed to make small changes in focal length. On balance, 'Insta-focus' is a useful advance, and would come into its own especially in cold weather when, with gloved hands, wheel-focusing can be fiddly.

Here seems as good a place as any to air one minor and one major point to almost all binocular manufacturers, not only Bushnell. First, birdwatchers do not all like their binoculars to hang at the same height, so may we please have adjustable-length lanyards? Secondly, and more importantly, we want binoculars which will focus down to within two or three metres; but perhaps there is some technical problem in achieving this?

The 'Bushnell Explorer' 10×50 is well-constructed, optically sound, and good value for money at around £105. And while we are talking about the cost of binoculars: can't those expensive-looking cases be made an optional extra? Most of us never use them!

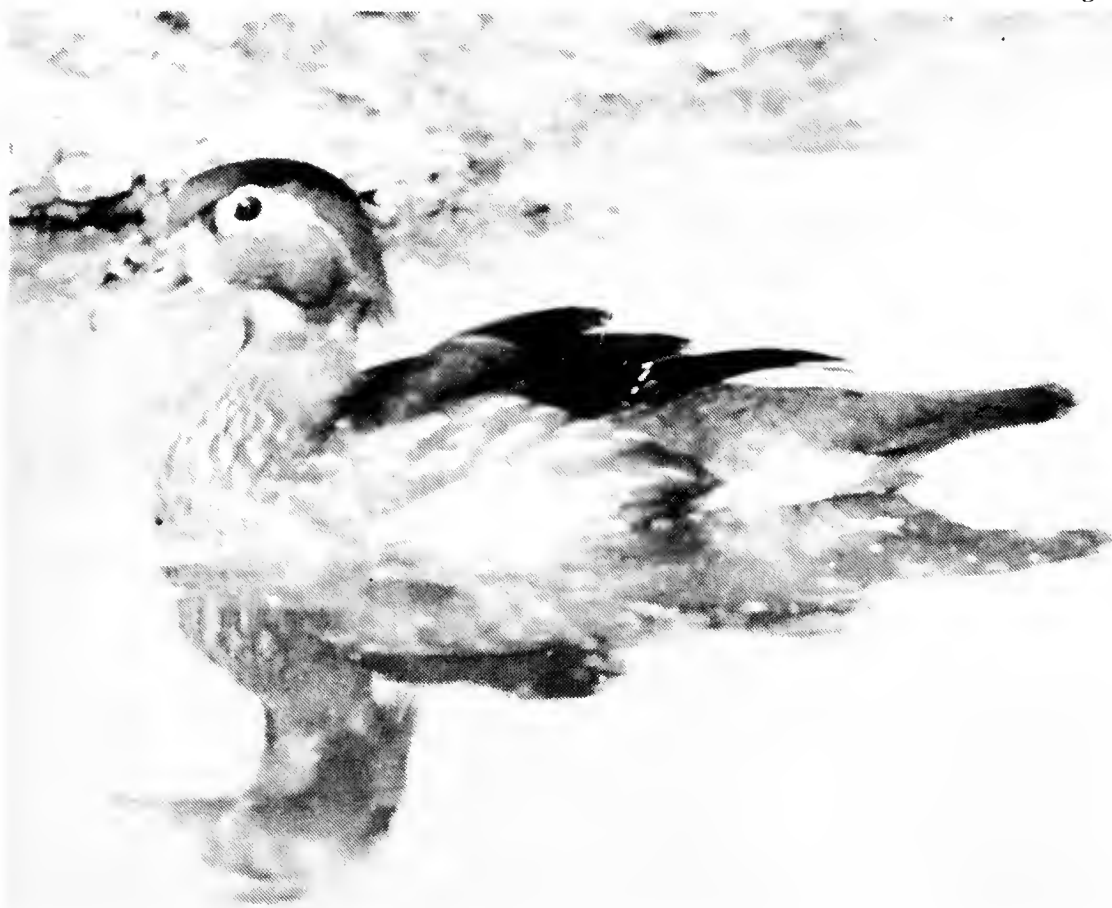
P. J. GRANT

Mystery photographs



72 This adult Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* should not have proved too difficult, especially for readers who have visited one of the species' localised Mediterranean haunts (likely to be Mallorca for most of us). This one is doing just what they all seem to do most of the time: endlessly glide-patrolling rocky, wave-washed coasts, wings fixed in a distinctive shallow arch, head projecting well forward, tail straight-sided and rather tightly closed, the whole giving a sailplane appearance. It is a leisurely and very graceful performance, and, once the excitement of the first sightings of the world's rarest gull has subsided, there can be no more beautiful or atmospheric accompaniment to a relaxed picnic lunch atop some craggy, limestone, Mallorcan sea-cliff. This one passes at just below eye-level, and

the rather stubby, dark (actually red) bill and sloping forehead catch the eye. The upperparts are decidedly paler than the rather dark grey-backed, yellow-legged, local race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus michahellis*, making the white leading and trailing wing-edges less obvious. It lacks any large white mirrors on the wing-tip, which are so obvious, even at long range, on Herring Gull. The small mirror on the outermost large primary is species-diagnostic on adults. A useful comparative shot of *L. a. michahellis* is photograph 199 in Grant (1982, *Gulls: a guide to identification*). There is no extension of the black wing-tip onto the outer greater primary-coverts, indicating that our individual is an adult (fourth-summer or older); the photograph was taken by Dr Richard Chandler in Mallorca in April 1980, so we can calculate that the bird was hatched in 1976 or before. PJG



226. Mystery photograph 73. Identify the species. Answer next month

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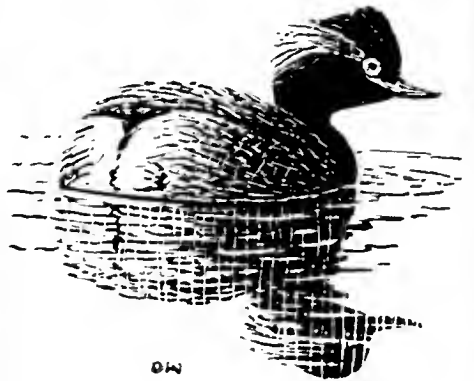
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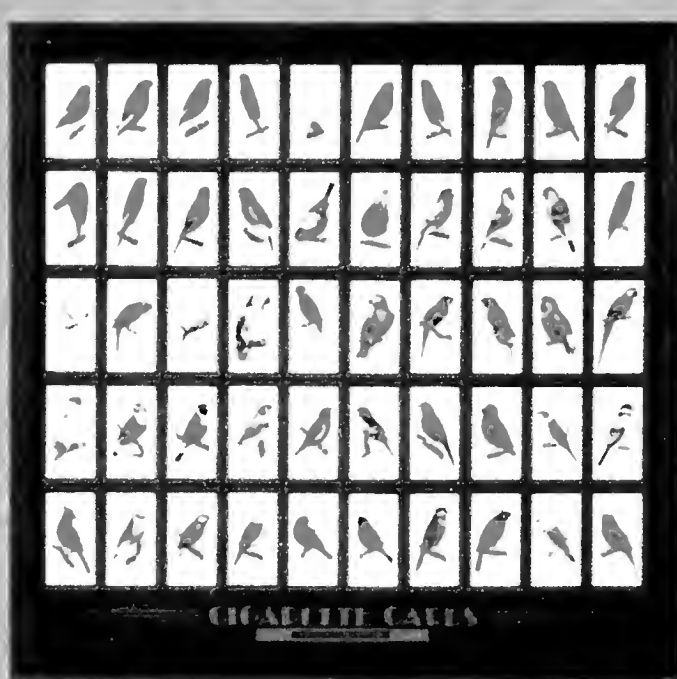
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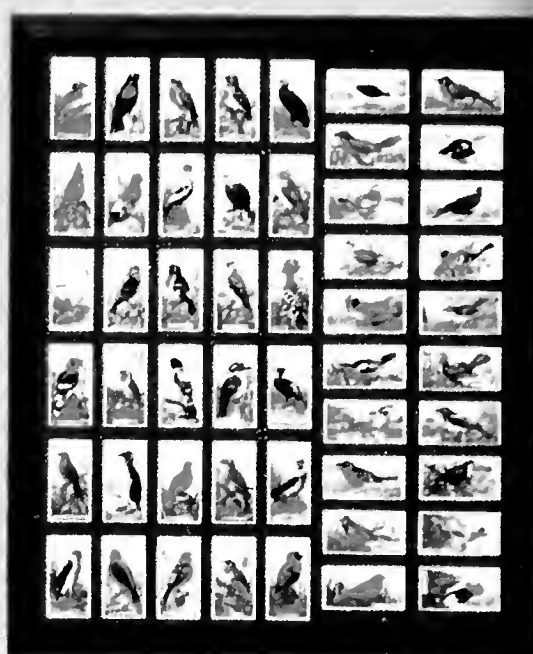
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Notes

Successful fostering by Red-throated Divers In 1979, a 9-ha loch on Fetlar, Shetland, held five breeding pairs of Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata*. In the previous five years, there had been four or five pairs, but during that period a total of only four young fledged, the main causes of failure being disturbance, avian predation, flooding of nests, and desertion by adults when strong winds cause severe foaming around the shores. When near the shore, each pair is strictly territorial, but out in the centre of the loch more tolerance is shown between pairs. The detailed events during 1979 were as follows:



Pair *A* had one egg on the southern shore on 28th May, but it had disappeared by 30th; on 17th June, a replacement clutch of two eggs was situated on the southwestern shore. Pair *B* had two eggs on the western shore on 3rd June. After torrential rain overnight on 27th/28th June, the water-level had risen appreciably: pair *A*'s nest was awash, the eggs lying in about 3 cm of water, so I moulded a section of turf onto the nest and replaced the eggs, which the adult returned to and incubated within five minutes; pair *B* had a newly-hatched chick with them on the water, and the remaining egg clear of the water. Pair *C* was attempting to incubate a replacement clutch of two on this day, having lost one clutch during heavy foaming on 3rd June; its eggs were almost covered by water, so I raised the nest with turf, and the adult quickly resettled on them. Pairs *D* and *E* had failed twice and once, respectively, by 28th June. On 30th June, a Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* attacked the incubating adult of pair *C*, and later the same day the eggs had been preyed on; this pair subsequently lost its single, second, replacement egg during heavy foaming. Pair *A* hatched off two chicks on 9th or 10th July, when pair *B*'s single chick was still going strong (its second egg failed to hatch). On 25th July, all three chicks were together at the southern end of the loch, being tended by pair *A*, while pair *B* was loafing close to the shore in its own territory. During the next three weeks or so, I carried out several lengthy watches: invariably, all three chicks were together in the southern territory, the chick from pair *B*, about 12 days older than the other two, being readily distinguishable. On 31st July, one of the adults of pair *A* flew in with a sand-eel; all three chicks swam up to it and begged, swimming around in front and pecking at its breast; eventually the sand-eel was passed to one of the smaller chicks. Pair *B*, in its own territory, showed no interest. On 5th August, only one adult of pair *A* was present when I arrived, but after 20 minutes its mate flew in with a sand-eel, which it eventually gave to the large chick, and then flew out to sea; for the next 25 minutes, both smaller chicks persistently begged for food from the remaining adult, until the mate returned with another sand-eel, which was soon given to one of the smaller chicks; the same adult flew out again, and did not return before I left. On 7th August, neither adult of pair *A* was present when I arrived, but all three chicks were together close to the sheltered southeastern shore; in the next two hours, all chicks were fed by the adults; throughout this time, pair *B* quietly slept or preened close to the shore in its own territory. On each of two brief watches on 13th and 17th August, the three chicks were associating together: on 13th with one adult, and on 17th with both adults in attendance; on each occasion both adults of pair *B* were loafing.

Pair *B*'s chick had fledged by 22nd August, one of pair *A*'s by 25th and the other by 27th: giving fledging periods of, respectively, about 55 days, 46-47 days and 47-48 days. G. Bundy (1976, *Bird Study* 23: 249-256) gave a fledging period of 43 days (range 38-48) for Red-throated Divers, but, with one pair rearing three chicks, it is to be expected that the period would be rather longer. I have found no account of fostering by Red-throated Divers in the literature.

NICHOLAS DYMOND
RSPB, Bealace, Fetlar, Shetland

Failure of Whooper Swan to moult wing feathers On 17th January 1980, a catch of 50 Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* was made at Eastpark Wildfowl Refuge, Dumfries & Galloway. Each bird was ringed with a metal ring and with an individually coded yellow plastic ring, readable in the field. In addition, the tails and primaries were stained yellow with picric dye. One of these swans, an adult male with plastic ring HBZ, was established after the catch to be paired to another ringed swan, HCJ, though without any cygnets. The pair stayed at Eastpark until early February, and was seen subsequently about 40 km to the west for a fortnight from 10th February.

On 18th November 1980, HBZ was identified by his plastic ring, at Isle Steps, a regular haunt of Whooper Swans about 10 km northwest of Eastpark. His primaries and tail feathers were still stained yellow, indicating that they had not been moulted during the normal annual moult which takes place in July and August. He was accompanied by his mate HCJ and two cygnets. The family stayed in the area, including visiting Eastpark, until January 1981. Of the 50 marked swans, 36 others were seen during the winter, but all had moulted normally.

HBZ did not return to Eastpark the following winter, but on 31st January 1982 was seen in a flock of 62 Whoopers at Scotby, Cumbria, about 35 km east of Eastpark. His primaries and tail feathers were their normal white, showing that he had moulted during the summer of 1981. It was not recorded whether his mate was present nor whether they had bred.

It is universally accepted that all wildfowl moult their main wing feathers at least once a year, with some of the stiff-tails (Oxyurini) carrying out this moult twice. Recently, it has been found that the Ruddy-headed Goose *Chloephaga rubidiceps*, a South American sheldgoose, can have a partial moult, with the inner and outer primaries moulted at different times, probably in alternate years (Summers 1982). Bewick's Swans *C. columbianus* caught in winter at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, and dyed with picric dye, have not infrequently returned the following winter with at least some yellow tail feathers still present, but these are moulted in the course of the winter, and this is probably no more than a prolongation of the annual moult. Certainly none of over 500 swans which had their primaries dyed ever returned the following winter without having moulted. It is thus extremely unlikely that the dyeing affected the moult of HBZ.

The fact that HBZ bred successfully in the summer of 1980 suggests that neither ill-health nor poor condition could have been involved in inhibiting his moult.

C. R. G. CAMPBELL and M. A. OGILVIE

The Wildfowl Trust, Eastpark Wildfowl Refuge, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway
The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT

REFERENCE

SUMMERS, R. W. 1982. The absence of flightless moult in the Ruddy-headed Goose in Argentina and Chile. *Wildfowl* 33: 5-6.

Common Gull with retained juvenile plumage On 24th February 1982, near Manston, Kent, I saw a first-year Common Gull *Larus canus* still with

pale-fringed, brown, juvenile mantle feathers and scapulars: the feathers were faded, so that the scaly pattern was less neat than that on a fresh-plumaged juvenile. Juvenile head and body plumage is usually moulted during the first autumn, and replaced by the grey-backed first-winter plumage. Individuals with a few retained juvenile scapulars or mantle feathers among the grey first-winter ones are not infrequent, but their complete retention is probably very exceptional. Further, it seems likely that this individual had completely missed the post-juvenile moult, although the similar appearance of the juvenile and first-winter plumage of the remainder of the head and body prevents certainty on this point.

P. J. GRANT

14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

Terns showing mixed characters of Black and White-winged Black Terns

At about 10.00 GMT on 12th September 1981, I was watching a group of about 25 Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, when I noticed a pale-winged marsh tern with a dark 'saddle'. After watching it through 20× telescope for about ten minutes, as it moved up and down the lake with the tern flock, I located a second tern showing similar features. For a while, both birds separated from the main group and moved about the lake together. Unfortunately, after concentrating on one of them, I lost the other and did not relocate it. Both birds resembled juvenile White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus* and, for a while, I thought that they were that species. The saddles were not so dark and obvious as on that species, however, and the single bird that I continued to watch for a further two hours showed dark breast-side patches, and its shape, structure and flight were identical to the accompanying Black Terns. It was seen again briefly on 19th September.

The following notes were taken of the single bird:

Mostly distant flight views, although very occasionally watched at close range. Distant view recalled juvenile White-winged Black Tern: pale wings, dark 'saddle' and white rump, but 'saddle' lighter brown, less obvious than the very dark looking 'saddle' of that species; noticeable, however, at all ranges. Dark on back of head, but extent uncertain. Mantle, back and scapulars dark brown, slightly darker on mantle, producing dark 'saddle'. On close view: paler edges to feathers noted, especially evident on rear scapulars, indicating a juvenile. Wings pale grey, very similar to juvenile White-winged Black Tern, darker on secondaries and primaries. Rump white, contrasting with 'saddle' especially when viewed 'back on'. Tail pale grey. Dark breast-side patches similar in size and as distinctive as on Black Tern, but very slightly browner in colour. Plumage appeared fresh and unworn. Underparts, including underwing, appeared same as nearby juvenile Black Tern. Shape, structure and flight same as Black Tern, with long, narrow wings typical of that species. Appeared to have a fairly long Black Tern-type bill. Unfortunately, close views rare: more details of head markings, extent of dark along leading edge of inner wing (although this appeared to be absent) and wings would have been useful.

A similar bird was described in 1978 by K. E. Vinicombe (*Brit. Birds* 73: 223-225). My bird differed from that individual by lacking the conspicuously white leading coverts, and the saddle was not so dark. He considered that individual to be either an aberrant Black Tern or a hybrid, and P. J. Grant, in an editorial comment, considered that a hybrid seemed likely to

be the best explanation. This bird was also presumably either an aberrant Black Tern or a hybrid; but, whichever it was, it closely resembled a juvenile White-winged Black Tern. Two juvenile White-winged Black Terns seen at Chew Valley Lake on 8th September 1979 had differing saddles: one being lighter dark brown than the other; this suggests that saddles of juvenile White-winged Black Terns may vary from individual to individual. It is clear that the 1978 bird was not an isolated occurrence, and that observers must check all criteria very carefully before identifying any marsh tern as a juvenile White-winged Black.

A. H. DAVIS

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Plumage variability of immature Common and Ring-billed Gulls

G. P. Catley's note on a tail-banded second-year Common Gull *Larus canus* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 88-89) belies the true extent to which plumage variability occurs among immature Common Gulls. My close scrutiny of many at Radipole Lake, Dorset, in recent years has revealed considerable numbers of second-years possessing vestiges of both secondary bars and tail bands. Although normally rather insignificant, these features can often attain at least the prominence shown by GPC's bird. Further, I would suggest, albeit without any numerical evidence, that P. J. Grant's estimate of one in 300 showing these features would underrate the numbers involved.

First-year Common Gulls also show confusing overlap of certain features with Ring-billed Gulls. Contrary to descriptions in the literature, many first-winters possess, for example, dark brown tertials with only the thinnest of white edgings to the feathers, and an even greater proportion lack a clearly defined leading edge to their dark tail bands, having instead a dusky suffusion extending up the outer web of each feather. Both these features are usually associated only with first-winter Ring-billed Gulls.

A similar degree of variation seems to exist in Ring-billed Gulls: of two second-winters at Radipole in November 1981, one showed a very prominent vestigial tail band and secondary bars, whereas the other had one dark spot in the tail and another in the secondaries of one wing, both of which were almost invisible in the field unless seen against strong light. The first of these birds still had a dark eye, whereas the second had already attained a yellow iris, presumably indicating that the latter was physically more mature (although of similar age to the first) and perhaps accounting for its depleted dark wing and tail markings.

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Herring Gull killing Black-headed Gull On 24th May 1979, on the Esk Estuary, near Ravenglass, Cumbria, I observed a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* take flight and land near a Herring *Larus argentatus* and a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* which were apparently fighting on the mud. The latter took off, followed by the Herring Gull, which, on catching up, began to peck and pull at the Black-headed Gull's right wing, forcing it to land in the water, where the attack continued. The heron again approached, separating the two

gulls, and about 35 Black-headed Gulls flew from nearby mud and circled above the Herring Gull. The latter's victim drifted away and flew; the Herring Gull again followed, dispersing the other gulls, caught the Black-headed by the tail and shook it vigorously in flight, making it fall to the water, where the Herring Gull pecked at its head. The heron yet again approached, drawing the Herring Gull's attention, but it soon moved off. The Herring Gull then moved to the Black-headed, which had again drifted, and killed it by repeatedly pecking at its head; the Herring Gull picked up the dead Black-headed by the bill, took off, but dropped it almost immediately, then dragged the corpse ashore by the right wing, and fed on it. While the Herring Gull fed, an immature Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* walked towards and around the Herring, then walked away. An immature Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* approached twice, each time being threatened by the Herring; on its third approach, the latter retreated to the water's edge, where it drank, bathed and preened (it had by then been feeding for 21 minutes). The Lesser Black-backed then took over and was still feeding on the much reduced corpse when observations ceased 16 minutes later, by which time a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* was also in attendance.

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Unusual behaviour of Choughs In 1979, during a study of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* on Bardsey, Gwynedd, C. Rowley, M. Peacock and I noticed strange antics for which I can find no reference in the literature and very little explanation. The first type of behaviour involved the Chough lying on its side or back, and is illustrated well by an account by CR: 'On 26th June, I was watching a family party of Choughs (two adults, and four young fledged about three weeks before) feeding on a steep grassy slope, with breaks for preening and wing-stretching in the usual manner. One of the young rolled over on to one side with both legs extended in the air; it was lying on a flat ledge along the slope, with its legs extended out from the slope. This posture was held for five seconds, after which a normal upright position was regained, and feeding resumed.' Similar behaviour was noted on 22nd July: among a flock of 14 Choughs, two juveniles (by their colour rings, aged as one month out of the nest) regularly rolled on to their sides and extended their legs in a like fashion, on a similarly steep (45°) slope. On this occasion, a wing was also extended in the air and the neck held in an extended position, with the head on its side flat along the ground. Later the same day, adults were seen on two occasions to lie on their sides and extend their legs, neck and wings for up to eight seconds at a time. On 19th August, a Chough of unknown age lay as described above, but on a rocky ledge on a small cliff. I. Bullock (*in litt.*) reported similar behaviour on rare occasions at South Stack, Anglesey, when a Chough also kicked its leg feebly, turned its head and stretched its tail, and remained thus for a full minute.

'Anting' by Choughs has been noted only once (Holyoak 1972), but is ruled out here as the Bardsey sites were thoroughly examined after each incident and no evidence of ants was found. Sun-bathing has been regularly recorded for this species (Holyoak 1972), but the posture is described as

'crouching, with body plumage raised and wings partly spread'; at no time have Choughs been recorded on their backs. All the incidents observed on Bardsey, however, have been in direct sunlight. Choughs spend a good deal of time preening and wing-stretching. Preening is particularly noticeable after feeding, and also at times of moult. In June and July, the young may still have been developing fully their plumage, especially their flight feathers: they fledge with the rectrices often only partially grown (Cowdy 1962), and, from young retrapped on Bardsey, it is evident that the partial juvenile moult is in its latter stages in late September. Furthermore, BTO Moult Cards show that adults start moulting primaries as early as July (Holyoak 1974); and those trapped on Bardsey in late September were still in the last stages of primary moult. It is possible, therefore, that this unusual behaviour is partly an extension of sun-bathing and plumage-maintenance activities.

Another explanation is that the Choughs were 'playing'. I. Bullock reported an individual rolling on to its back, wings stretched out, but also kicking and pecking at a tuft of vegetation held in its feet. Apart from the Chough's apparent 'excited' state, this incident alone could be dismissed as unusual feeding behaviour; but MP added further to this by a similar sighting on Bardsey, where a Chough pecked off a clump of thrift *Armeria maritima* on a steep slope, then rolled with it, chasing it and tumbling over with it down the slope. Further to these accounts of 'playful' Choughs, I, too, witnessed an extraordinary display on 30th September involving six individuals on a flat field by the Observatory. One was rather 'boisterous', making much noise and quarrelling with the others, all feeding on dung beetles *Aphodius contaminatus* by pecking and pulling apart sheep and horse dung; it actually picked up in one foot a piece of horse dung, then rolled onto its back and pecked vigorously at it for ten seconds. It then righted itself and proceeded to perform a perfect 'head-over-heels': with head tucked under the body and carpals used as 'shoulders' for support, it flipped its body forewards, completing a very neat forward roll; it did this quite carefully and deliberately three times, gaining an upright position after each. Other Choughs began squabbling with it (previous instances of such behaviour had been largely ignored by other Choughs), and it then resumed normal feeding. The only other times that I have seen Choughs on their backs have been when they are defending themselves against attack by one or more other Choughs: the one presumably getting the worst of the fight goes on to its back, presents its feet and bill, and grabs the other. In all the instances described, however, the individual, although with other Choughs, had no such prompting actions, and others took very little notice of it.

Williamson (1959), in an account of three or more Choughs on the Calf of Man excitedly fighting, suggested that play might be a valid reason for the behaviour. That crows (Corvidae) are fairly intelligent birds is well known: observations of 'intelligence' and play have been made for Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* (Baird 1964, Hayman 1953, Elphick 1976) and Rooks *C. frugilegus* (Baird 1964, Marshall 1961, Washington 1974, White 1971). The latter references to Rooks and crows somersaulting and hanging upside down are the nearest comparisons to the antics of the Choughs. What seems

to be unique is the Choughs' willingness to lie comparatively unprotected on their backs for such lengths of time, in such an unnatural and unbirdlike position.

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Earlier and later arrivals of migrants in central Sweden Long-term studies have demonstrated that migratory birds have arrived later in recent years than 30 years ago. This was established for 23 species by analysing first arrival dates during 1942-68 compared with 1969-74 (Mason 1977), and in closer detail by a study of the arrival and onset of breeding in a population of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* (Lawn 1980). It was proposed that the delay in arrival was correlated with cooler spring weather.

We compared the mean arrival dates for 41 migrants in 1965-79 with those for 1941-50 at Uppsala, central Sweden (59° 40' N 17° 40' E). The data from 1965-79 were collected by ME, while the information from the earlier period derives from an unpublished diary by John Rosenson: all records are from within 40 km of Uppsala. We have separated the species into three groups: (1) those which can be seen in February and March, (2) those arriving in April and May, and (3) waterfowl. The results are given in table 1. Differences in mean arrival dates were examined by using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test (two-tailed). Among species in the first group, two (Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*) showed no change; all others arrived earlier in 1965-79 than in 1941-50 (the difference is highly significant: $T = 0$, $P < 0.01$, $N = 11$). In the second group, we found that, on average, species were recorded later in 1965-79 ($T = 64.5$, $P < 0.05$, $N = 22$), although some showed no change or arrived earlier in the latter period. This is the same trend as was shown for 23 migrants in Britain (Mason 1977): in both that and our study, the Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* arrived earlier during the recent period, but, contrary to Mason, we also found similar changes for the Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and the Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*. Among waterfowl, all four species examined have delayed their mean first arrival ($T = 0$, n.s., $N = 4$), the Garganey

Anas querquedula by as much as 19 days. The differences in arrival dates are probably due to recent climatic changes. In the 1940s the winters were cooler, in some years much cooler, than the average for the century as a whole to the present, while springs were generally warmer (Liljequist

Table 1. Mean arrival of migrants in central Sweden in 1965-79 compared with 1941-50

	PERIOD 1941-50		PERIOD 1965-79		Difference between 1965-79 & 1941-50 (days)
	No. of years with records	Mean arrival date	No. of years with records	Mean arrival date	
(1) EARLY SPECIES (March-April)					
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	9	March 29	15	March 10	-19
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	10	March 25	15	March 12	-13
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	9	March 30	15	March 17	-13
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	10	April 3	15	March 18	-16
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	10	April 2	15	March 20	-13
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	10	April 9	15	March 24	-16
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	10	March 26	15	March 26	0
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	10	March 31	15	March 27	-4
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	6	April 12	13	April 1	-11
Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	5	April 7	15	April 6	-1
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	7	April 16	15	April 7	-9
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	10	April 8	15	April 8	0
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	10	April 14	15	April 8	-6
(2) LATE SPECIES (April-May)					
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	8	April 4	15	April 12	8
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	8	April 3	15	April 12	9
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	8	April 8	15	April 13	5
Wheatcar <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	10	April 24	15	April 23	-1
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	10	May 3	15	May 3	0
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	7	April 27	15	May 3	6
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	7	May 9	15	May 5	-4
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	6	May 4	15	May 5	1
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	10	May 2	15	May 6	4
Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	10	May 12	15	May 7	-5
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	8	May 6	15	May 7	1
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	9	May 9	15	May 7	-2
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	10	May 7	15	May 8	1
Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	10	May 2	15	May 9	7
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	8	May 9	14	May 10	1
Ortolan Bunting <i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	5	May 3	15	May 10	7
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	6	May 12	15	May 12	0
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	9	May 19	15	May 14	-5
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	10	May 12	15	May 15	3
Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	7	May 15	15	May 16	1
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	10	May 15	14	May 17	2
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	10	May 18	15	May 17	-1
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	6	May 17	14	May 18	1
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	10	May 21	15	May 23	2
(3) WATERFOWL					
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	5	March 30	15	April 5	6
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	5	April 13	14	April 14	1
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	5	April 11	15	April 19	8
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	4	April 9	12	April 28	19

1966). The recent amelioration in winter climate may explain why birds in the first group now arrive much earlier: most are short-range migrants which can respond directly to weather conditions (see Alerstam & Högstedt 1980). As expected, the change in arrival times for migrants from tropical areas, which must rely on their internal clocks for arriving at an optimal time (most are insectivorous and arrive late), is of much smaller magnitude than for species in the first group.

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Letters

Kestrel kites In their recent letter on the subject of possible disturbance to breeding birds by 'Kestrel kites' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 336-337), Dr M. W. Pienkowski and Dr P. R. Evans assumed that 'the RSPB wished neither to include a warning nor to risk their sales figures'.

We much regret that, owing to a most unfortunate slip-up in our internal communication system, the Society's sales staff did not learn of the concern of Dr Evans and Dr Pienkowski until *after* the last of its stock of kites had been sold. This was why no warning was included.

All products sold by the RSPB are carefully selected bearing in mind quality, value for money and the need to assist in developing a public interest in birds, which is one of the Society's principal objects. No new product would be selected if the Society knew of any harmful effects on birds which could reasonably result from its use. If such harmful effects were subsequently brought to the Society's notice, the product would either be withdrawn from sale or a suitable warning be sent out with it.

Under no circumstances would the Society knowingly allow the interests of its sales figures to predominate over the interests of wild birds.

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Shy and Black-browed Albatrosses The recent letter on 'Identification of Shy Albatross [*Diomedea cauta*]' by Dr J. A. Kieser (*Brit. Birds* 75: 37-38) prompted me to look through my photographs of this species. I agree with



227-229. Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophrys*, off central Chile: top, almost fully adult, September 1981; bottom left, near-adult, September 1981; bottom right, probably second-winter, July 1981 (Ed Mackrill)

most of what Dr Kieser said, but, having seen thousands, I tend to follow Dr John Warham's opinion, quoted in your editorial comment, that the small dark mark at the leading edge of the wing is a useful character, but is visible with certainty only at close range. Shape is much more useful: the steep (almost petrel-like) forehead of Black-browed *D. melanophrys* is lacking,



230-232. Shy Albatrosses *Diomedea cauta salcm*, off central Chile: top, adult, March 1981; bottom left, probably adult, July 1981; bottom right, immature, August 1981 (Ed Mackrill)

surely due to the very deep-based bill, and the tail looks much longer. The upperwings and mantle are also much paler than those of all the tens of thousands of Black-browed Albatrosses that I have seen. These features are shown in plates 227-232.

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Identification of mollymawks It was rather surprising to find a letter about the identification of the Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta* in *British Birds* (75: 37-38), when the species has not yet occurred anywhere in the North Atlantic area, and even more surprising that, while one of the authors of the work referred to had been consulted (Dr John Warham), nobody considered the others (myself and Sir Hugh Elliott). I should like to express some reservations about Dr J. A. Kieser's approach to seabird identification and add some further comments on mollymawk identification based on personal experience.

The stress is in fact wrongly placed on the different features used for the identification of Shy and also Yellow-nosed Albatrosses *D. chlororhynchos* on page 71 of *Frontiers of Bird Identification* (1980), as may be seen by looking at the photographs opposite it. As in the case of most other seabirds, while it may be necessary to rely on detailed markings when first learning to identify these birds, it soon becomes much easier to do it at a distance from their general shape, coloration and behaviour, as set out at the start of the section on each species. It is this that should have been in italics.

The details of the markings of the head and bill are of more doubtful value at sea because not only are they often hard to see, but they also show a great deal of variation with age and race. Thus, we were not correct in saying young Shy Albatrosses are 'much like adults', because in fact they tend to have drab grey heads, and bills which differ in their shade with the race. A failure to appreciate this resulted in repeated reports of the occurrence of the grey-headed New Zealand race *D. c. salvini*, sometimes known as the Grey-backed Albatross, off South Africa, when I have been unable to trace any specimen collected outside the Pacific (*Cormorant* 2: 7-10).

Similarly, it has long been known—but generally overlooked—that adults of the nominate race of Yellow-nosed Albatross from Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island have very grey heads with pale foreheads, whereas those from the Indian Ocean of the race *D. c. bassi* have largely white heads with only a little grey on the cheeks (R. K. Brooke, J. C. Sinclair and A. Berruti: *Durban Mus. Nov.* 12: 171-180), and I also found them instantly distinguishable at sea. Therefore, when you have identified the species of your mollymawk in the distance by its shape and behaviour, look at its head and bill, if it comes close, to find out its age and origin.

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P. J. Grant has commented that: 'Tangible field-marks, such as the pre-axillary notch of Shy Albatross to which Dr Kieser drew attention, are a help towards identification, especially for newcomers to albatross identification, before each species' distinctive characteristics and jizz are known thoroughly.' Eds

Captive American Kestrels The paper on 'American Kestrel: new to Britain and Ireland' (*Brit. Birds* 74: 199-203) stated that only one American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* was imported into Britain during 1970-76. While I was on holiday in Spain, in June 1972, I saw a number of American Kestrels for sale in the open-air market in Barcelona (plate 233).

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233. Captive American Kestrels *Falco sparverius*, Spain, June 1972 (J. F. Coley)

T. P. Inskipp has commented: 'It is likely that these came from Mexico—one of the few Latin American countries that has exported birds of prey in recent years. If so they could well be *F. s. sparverius*—the same race that would reach this country. However, it is possible they refer to the fairly distinct dark race from southern Mexico *F. s. tropicalis* or another race from even farther south (one cannot be sure of the race from the photograph). I should think that trade in this species was probably never substantial and that the coincidence of two turning up in different parts of this country in 1976 is more likely due to vagrancy than to Continental escapes.' Eds

Cirl Buntings and elm trees The article on the decline of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108) suggests briefly some possible causes of the phenomenon but, remarkably, makes no mention at all of what I believe to be the prime one: the nearly complete disappearance of its favoured habitat, English elm *Ulmus procera*. Back in 1973, I think I implied that the Cirl Bunting would be the species most affected by Dutch Elm Disease (*Bird Study* 20: 84-87), and now it seems to be apparent.

I had always found Cirl Buntings in English elm country, and singing from within the crown of one. The Vale of Aylesbury, the Sussex coastal plain and my local population each side of the Hog's Back in Surrey were the classic Cirl Bunting areas, and all were English elm. Then I heard many in the Hams region of south Devon and east into Dorset, English elm dominated again.

The very different Cornish elm *U. carpinifolia* var. *cornubiensis* is not in leaf until a month or so after the Cirl Bunting has begun singing and the English elm is providing the cover it requires, so where the two elms co-exist, which is only from Plymouth to near Kingsbridge, I suspect it is the English which

is important, but west of Plymouth-Okehampton-Barnstaple there is no English elm and Cornish may be the key tree, even if early song has to be from another tree altogether.

Cornish elm is much less susceptible to the disease than is English, and losses have not been severe in south Cornwall. The disease is not yet so rampant in the English elm, either, in southwest Devon, and this is where the greatest numbers of Cirl Buntings survive.

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H. P. Sitters has replied as follows: 'I do not find Mr Mitchell's suggestion very convincing as the *main* reason for the decline in the Cirl Bunting described in my paper. The most significant effects of Dutch Elm Disease have been felt for only the last ten to 15 years, and then only in a relatively restricted part of the Cirl Bunting's range. The decline which I have described probably started during the period 1930 to 1950 and has affected the population in France and Belgium as well as in Britain. If Mr Mitchell is correct, the Cornish population would have hardly been affected. This is not the case (see table 1 in my paper). Furthermore, although I would agree that Cirl Buntings favour higher song perches than many other species, experience in Devon is that there is no particular need for them to be elms. A variety of trees and shrubs is used, as well as roofs and television aerials. No doubt loss of hedgerow elms may have resulted in local decreases or shifts of the population, but I very much doubt whether Dutch Elm Disease has been an important reason for the decline described in my paper.' Eds

Cirl Buntings in the Isle of Wight Apparently sharing the widespread misapprehension that the Isle of Wight is a part of Hampshire, and that its records are included in the *Hampshire Bird Report*, the author of the recent paper on Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108) unfortunately omitted the former county from consideration.

My estimates, based on information in the *Isle of Wight Bird Report*, suggest that the Isle of Wight row in table 1 of the paper should contain the figures 4, 4, 1, 0.

Almost all recent records have been in the eastern half of the Island, and the species was formerly much more numerous there. A. G. More, referring to that area, described the Cirl Bunting as 'one of the commonest hedge birds' (in Venables' *New Guide to the Isle of Wight*, 1860). In that same area during the first two decades of the present century, it was sufficiently familiar to have a local name: 'Farmyard Bunting'.

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Asynchronous escape reactions of birds C. J. Newman and K. E. Vinicombe (*Brit. Birds* 73: 585-586) described the behaviour of a Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* which, when disturbed while in company with other species, usually took an independent line, or would crouch when other waders took flight. Similar cases must be familiar to most birdwatchers. Several instances have come to my attention in recent years in which it has been suspected that a rarity has been captured by a bird of prey, and the sand plover note seems to reaffirm the idea that isolated individuals within a flock of a closely related species may be 'out of tune' with the rest. I remember stories of flocks of Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* being flushed, leaving a single Lesser Golden *P. dominica* behind,

and have often seen other single waders stay put when a surrounding group of another species flew. Frequently, I have noticed a flock of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* take to the air, leaving a Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* still on the ground, and similarly Herring *L. argentatus* leaving behind Glaucous Gulls *L. hyperboreus*. In such cases, the flock may 'leapfrog' over short distances, so leaving the odd individual, which fails to react, conveniently at one end. Occasionally there may be a frustrating reversal of this, when the common birds stay but the rarity flies off! There may be a degree of bias in that I would notice the actions of an oddity, whereas a laggard individual within a flock of uniform composition would attract less attention, but this may nevertheless help to explain instances of apparently selective predation on unusual birds by predators, at least as much as may their different outward appearance.

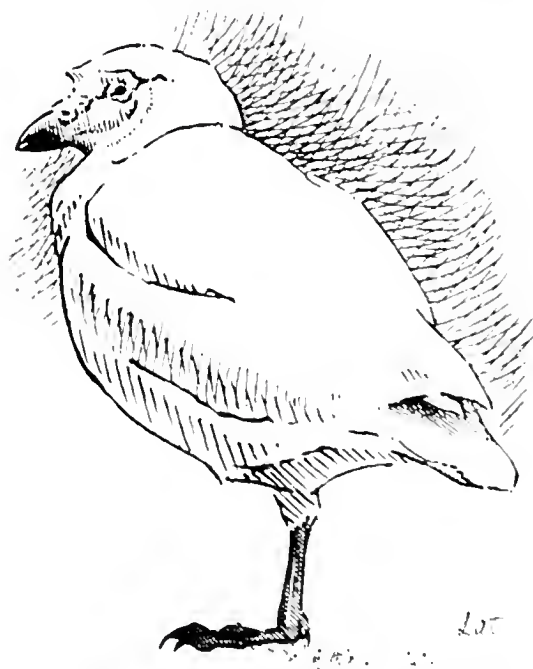
R. A. HUME

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Whether or not the 'rarity effect' is due to observer bias can be tested in field observations. We would welcome quantified observations from readers. EDS

That sheathbill I do hope that the Snowy (much better than Yellow-billed) Sheathbill *Chionis alba* will 'get its name in print' in *BB*, despite its knack of being able to cajole food from sailors, birders and fishermen, and its understandable preference for hitching a ride on a frigate rather than flying the 8,000 miles. What a survivor! What character! What feet! With a head vaguely reminiscent of a Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*, body of an Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, feet of a raptor, wings of a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, flight of a gamebird and gait of a chicken, this must truly be the missing link of the bird world!

We were lucky to see it when it was perfectly healthy and either sitting on a warehouse roof or strutting up and down the dockside, where it kept a respectful distance of at least ten feet. Further attention was drawn to its presence by the easily audible click of its toe-nails on the stone wharf. The fact that it had roosted in a frying pan a few days earlier should not be held against it! Category 'D' just isn't good enough for this bird: it deserves an 'A' for effort.



LAUREL TUCKER

First Floor Flat, Arvalee, Clifton Down Road, Bristol BS8 4AH

Although originally sent as a personal letter and not submitted for publication, we could not resist the temptation to share Laurel Tucker's evocative account and eloquent plea with our readers. EDS

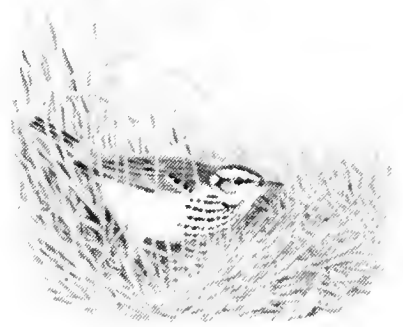
Announcements

'Birds New to Britain and Ireland' To obtain your copy at the reduced price of £11.50 (instead of £12.60), order now. After publication, this book will *not* be available through British BirdShop.

This book contains the 83 original accounts of all the birds seen in Britain and Ireland for the first time since 1945, from the oft-unbelieved but wholly acceptable breeding Moustached Warblers at Cambridge in 1946 to the present-day spate of rarities. Postscripts to the original descriptions have been added by Peter Grant and the current status of each species has been outlined by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. All available photographs of the actual birds have been included. The field notes on the first individual seen in Britain and Ireland are usually the most complete ever taken, so this book is an essential work of reference for every would-be rarity-finder or twitcher. It also makes entertaining reading (oh, the secrecy surrounding the first Collared Dove!). Order your copy now.

Birds new to Britain and Ireland

J. T. R. SHARROCK and PETER GRANT



'Birds of the Balearics' This new book, by the late David A. Bannerman and W. Mary Bannerman, illustrated by Donald Watson, will be published in January 1983. By arrangement with Croom Helm Ltd, however, *BB* readers can obtain an advance pre-publication copy by post through British BirdShop (see page vii).

International Conference on Bird Census and Atlas Studies The first announcement of the joint 8th International Conference on Bird Census Work and 6th Meeting of the European Ornithological Atlas Committee, to be held at Newland Park College, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, during 5th-9th September 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 232-233), listed the subjects to be covered. Offers of papers or poster papers must be submitted by 1st March 1983; complete manuscripts must be submitted by 1st July 1983 (this timing will allow for refereeing and editing of papers to be carried out so that the editors can discuss any necessary changes with authors at the conference itself).

The cost of the conference will be £120.00 (this covers conference fee,

food and accommodation from Monday 5th September to Friday 9th September).

All correspondence, including applications, bookings, offers of papers and submission of manuscripts, should be addressed to R. J. Fuller, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

Request

Sterling rather than dollar payments by US subscribers Payment is made in pounds sterling by subscribers from everywhere in the world except the USA. Most American subscribers pay in US dollars, but some do pay in ££ and we greatly welcome this; it is also cheaper for them. Payment in \$\$ has several disadvantages for *BB*: (1) the cheques have to be kept separate; (2) the sums have to be handwritten into account books rather than typed into our computer; (3) payment into our bank account has to be separate, with each cheque counter-signed individually; (4) clearance of the cheques may take weeks rather than the usual one or two days; (5) delayed clearance causes complications with monthly accounting; (6) the varying exchange rate means that we cannot predict how much we shall get in ££ for the \$\$ paid; (7) the bank charges can be as much as £2.00 for a single cheque; (8) any error in the sum paid results in this whole complicated business being repeated. These are the reasons that the conversion rate used by us, and by many other publishers (unless they have bank accounts in the USA), is £1.00 = \$2.50.

As a service, we do quote a dollar price for subscriptions and for book and disc offers, but we would much prefer all payments to be in ££. We hope that this explanatory request will show why this will help us, and also be cheaper for our American subscribers.

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during January to December 1983. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering July 1983 to June 1984.

7th-9th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Applications to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

18th January BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB Robin Woods on 'Some birds of the Falkland Islands'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least two weeks before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

29th January YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB GARDEN BIRD SURVEY. 9.00-10.00 a.m.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs' (not 31st March).

12th February RSPB FILM PREMIERE. Royal Festival Hall.

8th March BOC. Dr James Cadbury on 'The restoration of habitats for birds.' Central London. Information from Hon. Sec.

14th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' (not 31st March).

15th March-10th May YOC MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5 p.m.-7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

25th-27th March ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE ON BIRD CONSERVATION. Jointly organised by the RSPB and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. New University of Ulster, Coleraine. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

25th-28th March BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Southampton University. 'The importance of natural woodlands to bird populations.' (AGM 26th March.) Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

15th-17th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of Warwick. Includes YOC 'Bird Afternoon' on 16th April. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

21st May RSPB EAST ANGLIA MEMBERS' DAY. Thetford. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

21st May RSPB WELSH MEMBERS' DAY. Newtown, Powys. Additional optional programmes on 20th and 22nd May. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

26th May (provisional) WILDFOWL TRUST AGM.

5th-9th September INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIRD CENSUS AND ATLAS STUDIES. Newland Park College, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire. Details from R. J. Fuller, BTO.

20th-22nd September RSPB CONFERENCE. 'The impact of habitat loss on birds.' University of East Anglia. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

23rd-28th September INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION (EUROPEAN CONTINENTAL SECTION) CONFERENCE. France.

8th October RSPB LONDON DAY & AGM. Cunard International Hotel, Hammersmith. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

2nd-4th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Swanwick. Applications to BTO.

2nd-4th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. Bingley Hall, Birmingham (provisional). Details from Philip Read, Editor, *Cage and Aviary Birds*, Surrey House, 1 Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4QQ.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Bob Spencer

The opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

New legislation After long delays, the remaining parts of Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1982—those affecting bird protection—came into force on 28th September. Full details of the Act, plus comment on what it will or will not achieve, will appear elsewhere in *BB* shortly, but meanwhile a good general summary can be found in *Wildlife, The Law and You*, available from the Nature Conservancy Council, and, pending the publication of a new edition of *Wild Birds and the Law*, the RSPB (Species Protection Department, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL will do its best to help with any enquiries. Those regarding the licensing of captive birds of prey, however, should be directed to Mrs Joy Goss, DoE Wildlife Conservation Licensing Section, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9SZ.

Parrots too International concern at the excesses, scandals and illegalities associated with the international trade in parrots resulted in the acceptance of a UK proposal made last year at the New Delhi meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES or the 'Washington Convention'): this has now become effective under UK law through an Order dated 4th October 1982 under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. Import and/or export licenses are required for *all* Psittaciformes except Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* and Cockatiels *Nymphicus hollandicus*. Parrot identification will continue to be a big headache for most customs men, but at least they have a good start here in knowing which species need licences and which do not.

Personalities Congratulations and thanks are in order to several people. First, our warmest congratulations to Richard Porter on his assumption of the role of Chairman of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East. That OSME has burst onto the ornithological scene with ever-increasing activity and an impressive array of published material already to its credit has been due in no small way to Richard's predecessor, William Wilkinson. Secondly, the 1980 Kent Bird Report brings an era to an end: it is the last edited by Don Taylor, who has, with the help of the county's records and editorial committees, done them all, since 1969, with one exception. He was also a leading editor and writer of *The Birds of Kent*. Our best wishes go to his successor, Andrew Henderson.

New Recorder for Shetland Dennis Coutts, Da Knowe, Twageos Road, Lerwick, Shetland, has taken over from R. J. Tulloch as Recorder for Shetland.

Berwickshire Recorder R. D. Murray (145 Eskhill, Penicuik, Midlothian), Recorder for Peeblesshire, Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire, is now also Recorder for Berwickshire, in place of G. H. Evans.

First 'BB' control We are indebted to Adrian del Nevo for telling us about the first control at a bird observatory of an issue of *BB*. His note, which came with a scrupulously complete Unusual Record Form, read as follows: 'On 22nd July, I controlled a recent copy of *BB* which was exactly the same migrant, i.e. 75: 7, I had received some seven days earlier. The Observatory (Calf of Man) also made its own normal control; thus this additional specimen was most unexpected. As you can see (from the Unusual Record Form) it retains its fresh juvenile plumage (note the sharp edgings and unruffled characteristics). Indeed, the intact covering makes it a definite 3J—in fact it was a migrant before it had even hatched! Of course the GPO climatic conditions were favourable for such a movement during the previous two days . . .'. A full description and complete measurements are in our hands, from which we will mention only two points: 'EXPERIENCE OF SIMILAR SPECIES Much thumbing and field experience of *Bird Study*, *Ringling and Migration* and *Ibis*, thus the *BB* jizz was quite distinctive and noticeably more visual and entertaining than some of the others, CALL. None—though giving a

"slap/slop" sound when dropped.' (If you received two *BB*s in July, write to EMS, not us!)

Falklands birds Since the appearance of a Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba* in Plymouth, one wonders what else the Task Force may have brought back. Was the penguin reported from Mull (*The Times*, 10th August 1982) the real thing after all, and was the Grapevine slipping in thinking it was just another auk? No doubt many birdy tales will emerge from the saga in due course, but one we really liked was brought to our notice by David Holmes of the Devon BW & PS, which recalled those 'birds of omen' which were forever cropping up in stories of the wars and exploits of Ancient Greece and Rome. Evidently the frigate *Ambuscade* had a hot time in the Falklands campaign, and a Snowy Petrel *Pagodroma nivea* seemed to appear whenever an attack was imminent and became a good luck symbol to her crew. Fair enough, but there seems to be something uncanny about the arrival of a white dove (presumably *Columba livia*) as the ship was approaching the Lizard on the voyage home . . .

Sahel again John Davies has drawn our attention to a note in the *New Scientist* (9th September 1982) and two articles in *Nature* (291: 475-478, 299: 46-47) which seem to show all too clearly that the famous Sahel drought is continuing: it is now in its fourteenth year and indeed there has apparently been no rainfall of any consequence for 25 years. This has obvious implications for any Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* wintering in this sub-Saharan zone, and no doubt for other Palearctic migrants too, and probably explains the continuing non-comeback by Whitethroats in some areas. John points out that as long as the drought continues White-throat populations will continue to be depressed (no pun intended!), and also wonders whether local or regional extinctions might in time be made up by recolonisation by birds wintering elsewhere. It behoves us all to keep a close eye on our local birds, if any.

São Miguel Bullfinch For decades the São Miguel (or Azorean) Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula murina*, an Azores endemic, was feared to be virtually extinct, but single records from 1968, 1971 and 1975 showed that it was probably holding out somewhere in the native laurel forests of eastern São Miguel. In 1980, Dr Gerald Le Grand of the University

of the Azores Department of Applied Ecology confirmed that a small population survives in the forests of Pico da Vara. A joint project by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), Azores University and the Institute of Plant Ecology of Uppsala University sought to establish a suitable reserve, with funding from the Deutscher Bund für Vogelschutz, the Netherlands Foundation for International Nature Conservation and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (UK), plus a personal donation from Rolf Dornbach. Fieldwork began in May 1982 (with about ten birds located) and some steps have already been taken by the local Forest Service to declare a small (but purely voluntary) reserve. The area is still threatened, however, by the planting of introduced alien tree species: a full report of the desirable boundaries of a full reserve are being prepared as a matter of urgency. The media have helped with good radio, TV and press coverage, but there is still a long way to go. We shall await further developments with interest.

New west Palearctic species? In the latest issue of *Ornis Scandinavica* (13: 123-128), Ronald Sluys and Martin van den Berg argue the case for the Cyprus Pied Wheatear to be regarded as a distinct species (*Oenanthe cyprica*), and not merely a race of the Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*. They give as the principal reasons for this proposal the facts that: (a) the plumage of female *cyprica* differs strongly from the plumage of female *O. p. pleschanka*; (b) there are significant differences in various measurements, with no overlap in wing length; (c) *cyprica* has a very distinctive song quite unlike that of *O. p. pleschanka* (sonagrams are given in support of this).

Hidden talents of 'BB' staff We hear that, on a recent holiday weekend, Mrs Sheila Cobban—Tim Sharrock's very efficient PA, with whom many subscribers will have spoken or corresponded—was awarded first prize in a competition to find the sexiest wiggle. Surprising, perhaps, that Tim gets BB out on time each month?

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to September, unless otherwise stated.

For the first eight days of the month, high pressure to the south maintained a westerly flow across most of the country. A small depression centred over England on 5th and 6th did, however, bring a short period of easterlies in eastern areas, and the only September 'fall' at Spurn (Humberside), which included two **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and the first **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris*. Farther south, three **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* were found at Wells (Norfolk) on 5th and two more at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 6th, and an **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus palu-*



dicola at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 5th. On the south coast, **Icterine** and **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* were both present at Christchurch (Dorset) on 1st and 2nd, and another Melodious Warbler was at Prawle Point (Devon) on 4th. From 9th, high

pressure over the Continent began to influence the weather, bringing some southeasterly winds in the south, the westerlies continuing farther north. The high declined by 20th, when strong westerly weather took over until the end of the month. Passerine vagrants during the anticyclonic period occurred mainly in the south and west. The most interesting were a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* at Walney (Cumbria) on 11th to 13th, and a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 13th. **Ortolan Buntings** *E. hortulana* featured at Christchurch on 18th and on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 19th; **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* on Jersey (Channel Islands) on 14th, at Prawle Point on 16th and at Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 19th, a **Richard's Pipit** *A. novaeseelandiae* on the Lizard (Cornwall) also on 19th, and a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* found at Hayle (Cornwall) on 23rd. Another **Greenish Warbler** appeared on Hook Head (Co. Wexford) on 18th, together with an **Icterine Warbler**, of which others were also found on Cape Clear on 16th and at Prawle Point on 18th. A further **Aquatic Warbler** was reported from Cape Clear on 19th, and also **Melodious Warblers** from Porthgwarra (Cornwall) and the Lizard on 12th. Two **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* were also reported from St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) on 23rd, and two **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella cinerea*, also on the Isles of Scilly, at the end of the month. On the east coast, a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus*

bonelli was seen at Wells on 11th to 13th, a **Short-toed Lark** at Benacre (Suffolk) on 11th, and Norfolk's first **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata*, at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 18th and 19th. News from Shetland and Orkney was of two **River Warblers** *Locustella fluviatilis* and three **Lanceolated Warblers** *L. lanceolata* on Fair Isle, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Deerness (Orkney) and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* at Kirkwall (Orkney), both on 25th. Also in Orkney were several **Icterine Warblers** and **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, one of the latter species also being seen at Spurn on 29th. There were a few widely scattered reports of **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* and also of **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus*, with a concentration of 15 at Prawle Point on 29th. Also of note were a **Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* on the Isle of Man on 16th, a **Chough** *Pyrrhoroax pyrrhoroax* at Coniston (Cumbria) on 26th, and near-passerine **Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* at Bassenthwaite Lake (Cumbria) on 25th to 27th and at Blackpool (Lancashire) on 30th.

Nearctic invaders

With predominantly strong westerly winds across the Atlantic, conditions have favoured the arrival of American birds. A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* appeared on Cape Clear Island on 15th to 25th, a **Tennessee Warbler** *Verminora peregrina* at Holm (Orkney) from 5th to 7th, and a **Northern Water-**

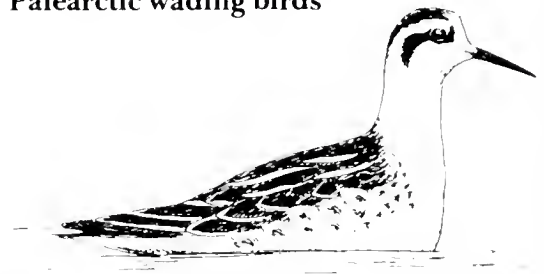
234. Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Somerset/Dorset, October 1982 (B. J. Widdens)



thrush *Seiurus noveboracensis* and a **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* in the Isles of Scilly. The wading birds, however, have been the most numerous, especially in Ireland. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were the most numerous species, with seven records in southern Ireland and nine from the West Country. **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* were found on the Ribble (Lancashire) on 20th, at Marshside (Merseyside) on 19th to 25th, and at Frodsham (Cheshire) on 30th, and in Ireland at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), Ballycotton (Co. Cork), Youghal (Co. Cork) and Clonakilty (Co. Cork). **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *C. pusilla* were also found at Tacumshin on 19th, and at Ballycotton on 29th and 30th August, and at Sutton Bingham Reservoir (Somerset/Dorset) in early October (plate 234), while there were **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* at Tacumshin and at Hayle on 27th (plate 235). Another species which usually arrives in numbers is the **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis*, and this month three were at Davidstow and two at Stithians Reservoir in Cornwall and singles at Hauxley (Northumberland) and at Tacumshin, Clonakilty and Lissagriffin (Co. Cork), all in late September. Other species were **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Lissagriffin on 28th August and at Ballycotton from 22nd, an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* on the Lizard at the end of the month, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Tacumshin on 18th and 19th, a **dowitcher** *Limnodromus* at Clonakilty on 4th, and **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*: two at Ballycotton on 29th, one at Wath Ings

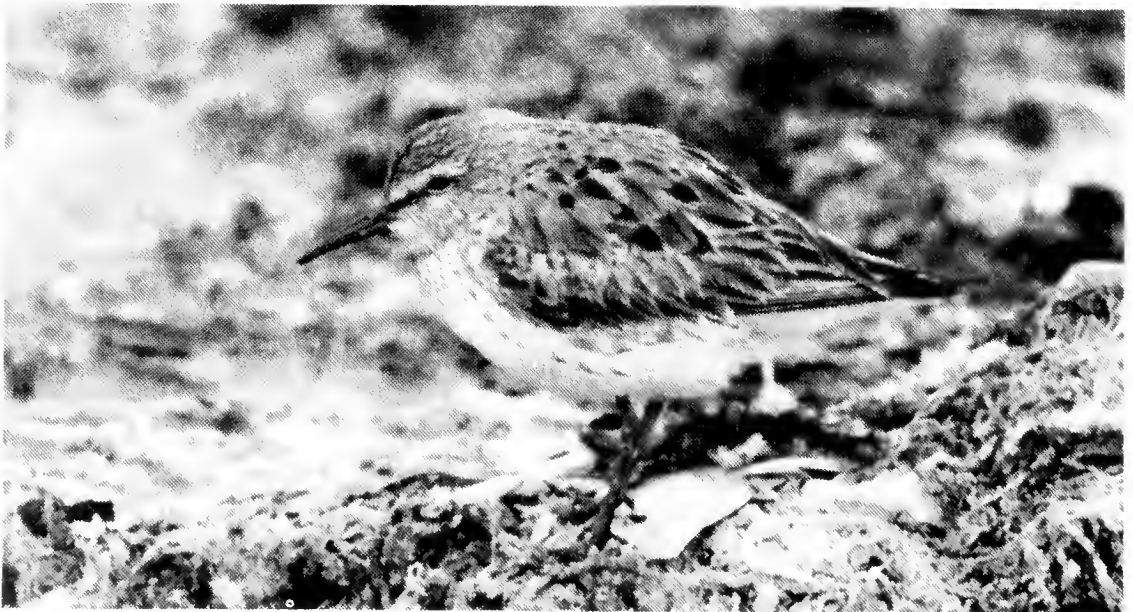
(North Yorkshire) and two at Davidstow.

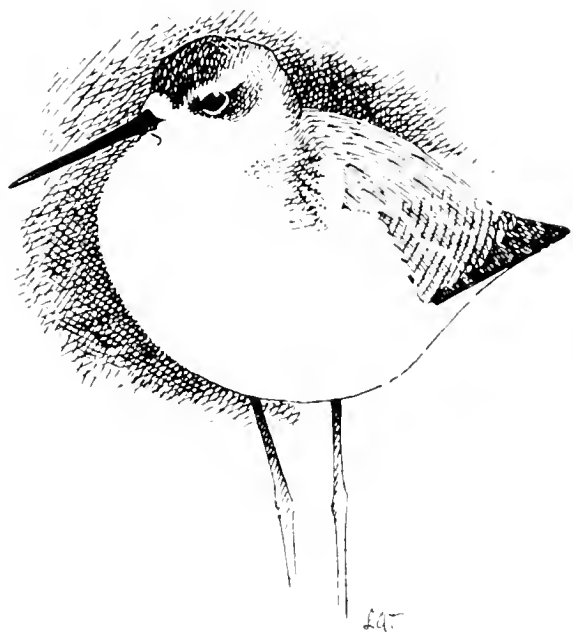
Paleartic wading birds



The numbers of passage waders this autumn has been low. **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* have been scarce and **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea* only in small parties, an exceptional 42 at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 18th being the highest reported inland, with another flock, of 28, at nearby Berrow (Somerset) on 19th, being exceptional for that locality. A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *C. acuminata* at North Killingholme (Lincolnshire) on 18th to 20th, and another **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*, once an extreme rarity, at Chew Valley Lake on 3rd October, provided the main excitements. The best wader of the month was certainly the Sker Point (Mid Glamorgan) **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* which stayed from August into September (plate 237). The weather caused some disruption to the passage of **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius*; many were seen just offshore, 16 at Prawle Point on 21st, and one inland at Draycote Reservoir (Warwickshire). **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus* were also found inland, at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 15th and at Daventry Reservoir (Northamptonshire), and there was one at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 16th. Two

235. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Cornwall, September 1982 (S. C. Hutchings)





Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* were reported from the last locality on 26th, and a **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* from Teesside (Teessmouth) on 18th.

Terns and others

From 19th to 21st, there was a small influx of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*, with 35 at Chew Valley Lake being the maximum reported, and with them came a number of **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* and also seven scattered records of **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus* (plate 236). Then came a report of a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri*, at Saltash (Cornwall) on 4th October.

American birds not so far mentioned were a **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*, proving once-more difficult to see, at Longtown Gravel-pits (Cumbria) from 19th, and **Blue-winged Teals** *Anas discors* at North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 21st, Marazion (Cornwall) on 23rd and Huttoft (Lincoln-
236. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Dorset, September 1982
(P. Vines)



shire) on 26th to 30th. It was a poor month for raptor records, but **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were sighted at Prawle Point (three on 10th), with singles at Hilbre on 19th and Christchurch on 30th. **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were reported from Greystones (Co. Wicklow) on 12th and Kilcoole (also Co. Wicklow) on 20th. Now quite a rarity, a **Corncrake** *Crex crex* was at Spurn on 14th and, perhaps commoner on passage, three **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were at Leighton Moss (Lancashire) on 10th. Although we all prefer our birds to fly here, a great welcome, with television coverage, was given to a **Yellow-billed Sheathbill** *Chionis alba* which joined the Royal Navy in the South Atlantic and was well-watched at Plymouth (Devon); just as plans were being made to give it an honourable discharge and send it home, it unfortunately died. For a comment on this bird's status, see the letter on page 591.

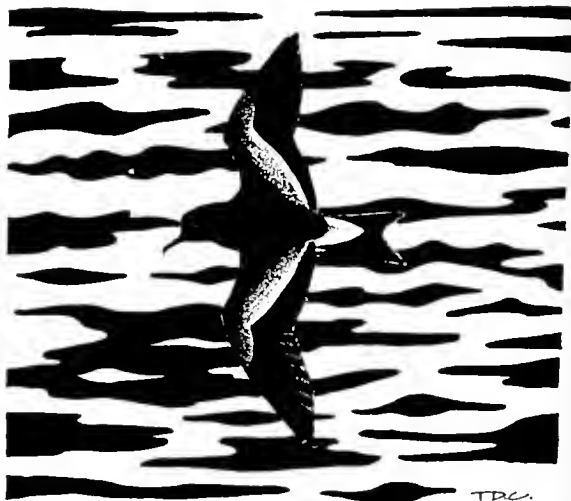


237. Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, Mid Glamorgan, September 1982 (colour print: R. G. Smith)

Sea-watches

Perhaps with the paucity of migrants onshore, more eyes were turned to the sea, with satisfaction on some days. **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis*—nowhere reported in large numbers—were seen at Dunwich (Suffolk) on 5th, Walney on 20th, Prawle Point on 21st and 29th and off Cape Clear. Similarly, **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* were sighted off Minsmere on 5th, Jersey on 12th, Prawle Point on 21st and again Cape Clear, with nine on 2nd. **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* were more numerous, the largest count being 73 at Prawle Point on 21st. On that day, 112 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* passed the same locality, and later, on 29th, a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* was sighted. The weather conditions did not disrupt

movements of **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, only ones and twos being reported close inshore. A **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* was a fine sight at St Ives (Cornwall) on 5th October, as was a **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* on the same seawatch, others being reported at Spurn on 25th, Prawle Point on 13th and 25th and off Rosslare (Co. Wexford) on 17th. **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were seen on a few watches, and one was found in the gull roost at Chew Valley Lake from 12th to 20th. Of ten records of **Mediterranean Gull** *L. melanocephalus*, nine were from the coast, and one in the above gull roost.



Latest news

In early November, widespread influx of **Parrot Crossbills** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, and three ultra-rare Nearctics: **American Redstarts** *Setophaga ruticilla* on Islay (Strathclyde) and at Gibraltar Point, and **Parula Warbler** *Parula americana* at Wigan (Greater Manchester).

Short reviews

Migration Paths through Time and Space. By **R. Robin Baker.** (Hodder & Stoughton, 1982. Paperback, £5.45) Continuing, on a generally popular level, the author's ideas propounded in *The Evolutionary Ecology of Animal Migration* (1978: reviewed *Brit. Birds* 74: 451-452). Even those parts which seem wildly improbable make stimulating reading. This book is intended for undergraduate and sixth-form students and teachers; it is, however, less of a textbook than this might suggest. Robin Baker does not really take us gently by the hand and lead us through the intricacies of past and modern ideas on migration; rather, he leads us on a wild and hectic romp, seldom sticking to the accepted path. His enthusiasm bursts through even from the printed page and this 248-page paperback is likely to astonish, irritate and provoke, as well as fascinate, anyone interested in migration. Above all, it is an enormously interesting and exciting treatment of an enormously interesting and exciting phenomenon. **Stimmen der Vögel Europas.** By **H.-H. Bergmann and H.-W. Helb.** (BLV Verlagsgesellschaft, 1982. DM54.00) The dimensions of a thick field guide (460 pages), with 2,000 sonagrams of 400 species. Illustrations are confined to decorative line-drawings and the text is wholly in German. This is, however, a first-rate reference book if you are one of the new

generation of birders who can convert a sonagram's visual presentation to a mental audio-image. **Guide des Oiseaux de Camargue.** By **J. Blondel and P. Isenmann.** (Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981. Fr F99.00) Entirely in French, but this useful book is so well laid out that even the least language-oriented English birder should be able to cope. Abundance through the year is shown by means of diagrams for all the common species. The 40 plates of colour photographs are well chosen to evoke the atmosphere of the Camargue and its birds. Every visitor to this south European Mecca will wish to own this attractive, useful, handy volume. **The Kingfisher.** By **David Boag.** (Blandford, 1982. £8.95) Personal account, crammed with detailed observations of Kingfishers on the River Stour in Dorset. Well illustrated with the author's colour photographs; also a useful source of reference. **Vanishing Eagles.** By **John Burton, illustrated by Trevor Boyer.** (Rigby International, 1982. £9.95) Previously produced via RSPB and Eagle Star Insurance, but now available through Rigby International, this attractive, large-format book is essentially a vehicle for Trevor Boyer's paintings, though John Burton has provided a readable and informative text. The early Eagle Star advertisement paintings do the artist less than justice; later eagles included here, plus

numerous smaller pictures, show how well his style and technique continue to improve. [MIKE EVERETT] **RSPB Guide to Bird-watching.** By Peter Conder. (Hamlyn, 1982. Paperback, £2.99) This excellent book (see review in *Brit. Birds* 72: 39-40) is now available in paperback. **The Butterflies of Northern Europe.** By Björn Dal. (Croom Helm, London, 1982. £5.95) Well illustrated, with usually two or three species to each double-page spread. More than half of the 123 featured species can be found in Britain. A slim volume especially useful for slipping into a suitcase or rucksack if you are making a summer trip to Fenno-Scandia. **Thorburn's Birds. Introduction and text by James Fisher, revised by John Parslow.** (Michael Joseph, 1982. Paperback, £6.95) This book has already been reviewed by Robert Gillmor (*Brit. Birds* 61: 232-233). When published in hardback in 1967, it cost £2.50; this new paperback version is nearly three times as much. It is very nice to be able to have such a well-reproduced collection of Thorburn's paintings. Personally, however, I should have preferred a text about Thorburn and his life, rather than mini-accounts of each of the birds illustrated. It is, surely, a book for the bird-art connoisseur, rather than the bird-watcher, yet the text is directed at the latter and not the former. **Falconry in Mews and Field.** By Emma Ford. (Batsford, 1982. £15.00) A 'what, how and why' of falconry, from its history to captive breeding and an assessment of falconry worldwide, with status of this sport in each of the major countries involved. The author takes a responsible stance and it is nice to see an entire chapter devoted to 'Conservation and the Law'. **Antarctic Wildlife. Photographs by Eric Hosking. Text by Bryan Sage.** (Croom Helm, London, 1982. £12.95) If, like me, you have never been to Antarctica, this book, and especially its fantastic photographs, will surely whet your appetite. Spectacular! Magnificent! These are the words which come to mind when one looks at the ice-scenery, the birds (from a single albatross to mass of penguins) or the other animals, such as elephant seal. This is one of those books which you should buy as a gift for a friend . . . and which you will doubtless hope that someone will buy for you! **Feathers to Brush: the Victorian bird artist, John Gerrard Keulemans 1842-1912.** By T. Keulemans and Jan Coldewey. (Keulemans & Coldewey, 1982. £75.00) In *BB's* obituary of Keulemans (1912), Gregory Mathews wrote: 'From 1870-1900 scarcely

any ornithological work of importance was complete without "illustrations by Keulemans".' He drew 20,000 plates before he was 50, largely from skins, mounted or pickled specimens. This interesting and handsome book celebrates a remarkable Victorian illustrator. [ROBERT GILLMOR] **The Significance of Egyptian Wetlands for Wintering Waterbirds.** By Peter L. Meininger and Wim C. Mullié. (The Holy Land Conservation Fund, New York, 1981. \$20.00) Until recently, the state of Egypt's modern avifauna was almost unknown. Two Dutch ornithologists, Peter L. Meininger and Wim C. Mullié, have done much to remedy this deficiency and their extensive surveys since 1978 form the basis of this excellent report. They describe, with a wealth of detail, the major wetlands, four of which are of international importance for waterfowl, while some 100,000 waders and over 25,000 Whiskered Terns also winter in Egypt. The impact of hunting is discussed, and Dr Bertel Bruun contributes a valuable chapter on conservation problems and the recent encouraging developments. The report is well illustrated with many photographs and line-drawings by Arthur Singer and the active young Egyptian ornithologist, Sharif Baha el Din. [SC] **John Clare's Birds.** Edited by Eric Robinson and Richard Fitter; illustrated by Robert Gillmor. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982. £6.95) As noted in this book's Introduction, the late James Fisher described John Clare as 'the finest poet of Britain's minor naturalists and the finest naturalist of all Britain's major poets.' If you like bird-poetry, you must get this book. If you are interested in the thoughts and investigations of our—often highly competent—early naturalists, you will want to read this book. **The Cotingas.** By David Snow. (OUP, 1982. £30.00) With 25 genera but only 65 species, the Cotingidae are confined to the forests of South America. This very well-designed book (crammed with information, but with a very spacious appearance) covers each species' distribution (with appropriate maps), ecology, behaviour, breeding, plumages and physical characters, including measurements. There are 21 full-page colour plates by Martin Woodcock, illustrating all the species, from the huge umbrellabirds to the tiny Kinglet Calyptura and the fascinating cocks-of-the-rock. **Golden Eagle Years.** By Mike Tomkies. (Heinemann, 1982. £9.95) This is a slightly unusual book, very much a personal account of the trials

and triumphs of one man, an author-naturalist living in self-imposed exile 'somewhere in the Western Highlands', as he tries to get to know and to photograph his local eagles. Readable, generally sound on Golden Eagle problems and ecology (well researched), and certainly a useful contribution to the literature on Scottish Golden Eagles. Sadly, the photographs are mainly rather disappointing. [MIKE EVERETT] **Der Zug Europäischer Singvögel: ein Atlas der Weiderfunde beringter Vögel. Part 3.** By Gerhard Zink. (Vogelwarte Radolfzell, 1981. DM67.00) Part 1 of this very useful atlas of passerine ringing recoveries was reviewed in detail by Robert Hudson in 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 217-218). Whilst the text is wholly in German, the meat of this book is its

maps, which no migration student can afford to ignore. The original intention to have three volumes has now been extended; the three which have already been published cover 86 passerine species by means of 385 maps (parts 1-3 are all still available, price DM154.00 from Vogelzug-Verlag, Duerrenhofstr. 16, D 7760 Moegglingen, Federal German Republic). Two more parts are in preparation, covering the buntings, finches, Waxwing, Pied Wagtail and Pied Flycatcher. These volumes provide not only a marvellous source of reference, but also thought-provoking browsing: the maps display the facts of bird-movements, which inevitably raise question after question in an ornithologist's mind. JTRS

Reviews

The Garden Bird Book. Edited by David Glue. Macmillan, London, in association with the British Trust for Ornithology. 1982. 208 pages; 8 colour plates, numerous black-and-white photographs, and two-colour line drawings. £7.95.

The introduction to this excellent new book from the BTO points out that gardens form some of the richest bird habitat in Britain, and that the estimated total area of gardens is roughly twice that of National Nature Reserves. The British passion for gardening, stocking even the tiniest suburban plot with trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables from all over the world, has undoubtedly been of immense benefit to birds. The fact that for a hundred years or more birds have not just been tolerated in gardens, with some exceptions, but positively encouraged, provides a direct link between gardening and the widespread present-day interest in birds and their protection. Nowadays, the bird societies cash in on this interest and sell bird tables, feeders, and books on bird gardening.

This book has one enormous advantage over others on the same subject: it is solidly based on the results of over ten years of the BTO's Garden Bird Feeding Survey. This national study has revealed not only what species regularly visit gardens, but at what times of year, and the foods they prefer, both natural and artificial. To this have been added data from ringing studies. For example, although only a dozen Blue Tits may be seen at a bird table at any one time, the total number feeding there during the course of winter may exceed 1,000. Then comes the individual expertise, covering the design and maintenance of gardens with birds in mind, the provision of shrubs and plants for food, shelter and nest-sites, and the creation of a pond. Feeding devices in all their variety are discussed, with recommendations on the best types, both bought and home-made, and on the right food to put out.

There are fascinating and useful chapters on the different kinds of birds which come to gardens, and in what numbers, on the foods they like best, and the importance of water to them. The problems caused to birds by cold weather, and the more frequently recurring hazards such as cats and other predators, are considered, with sound advice on alleviating the various problems. I was sorry not to see my favourite anti-cat device, though: strips of wide sellotape placed sticky-side-up on the tops of walls and fences where pussy is in the habit of climbing over; it is quite harmless but ever so discouraging! The reverse problem for bird-

gardeners of Great Spotted Woodpeckers attacking tit-boxes is not forgotten. The concluding chapter suggests how to study the birds in one's own garden, including the making and siting of different types of nest-boxes.

If there is a double-page spread in the book without a photograph, figure or line-drawing, I failed to find it. The drawings are especially pleasant, and greatly enhanced by the addition of shades of brown to the conventional black-and-white. The reproduction of the colour photographs is superb. As well as the main text, there are what I believe are known as 'fact-boxes' scattered throughout: single topics, separate from but relevant to the main text, are briefly discussed and illustrated. For example, in the chapter on cold weather, the fact-box subjects include insulation, energy needs, and movements of ringed thrushes in the 1981/82 cold winter—yes, it is that up-to-date.

David Glue and his team of eight fellow-contributors are to be congratulated on producing, along with the publisher, this informative, attractive and reasonably priced book. We may not all aspire to having a Snow Bunting or a Yellow-rumped Warbler feeding at our bird-table, as recorded in the book, but whatever our interest in birds and gardens this book will stimulate it.

M. A. OGILVIE

The RSPB Book of British Birds. By Peter Holden and J. T. R. Sharrock, illustrated by Hilary Burn. Macmillan, London, 1982. 188 pages; 93 colour plates; end-paper drawings. £5.95.

The first problem that faces the authors of a bird book designed for beginners is how to arrange the species. Some have tried arrangements by colour, size or habitat; but there is no real substitute for following the accepted systematic order. Granted that this has seen several drastic upheavals in my lifetime, it does attempt to produce an order based on biological relationships which the 'beginner', if he or she becomes a permanent birdwatcher, will have to learn. This book follows the order recommended by Prof. Dr K. H. Voous, and is a joint effort by the national organiser of the RSPB's successful YOC and the managing editor of this journal. The artist is Hilary Burn, whose work has come to the fore in the past five years and who is admirable at providing a meaningful habitat background to her lively but accurate birds.

The authors have selected what they believe to be the commonest 272 species of British birds and these include all those that breed regularly, except the Honey Buzzard, but admitting the Ring-necked Parakeet. Each species is given a section of salient but selected facts about it, and, in smaller type, a summary of its recognition points in the field and its status and habitat. There are no miniature distribution maps, for which I am grateful: they have proved a confusing feature of many otherwise good books and their space is much better taken up by useful text.

The larger-type species-sections clearly aim to catch the reader's interest rather than to give the usual summary of the life history. Here are some examples: Tufted Ducks nest among gulls for protection; Long-tailed Ducks breed farther north than any other duck; the reason for the hump on the Goldeneye's head; Kestrels hunt by moonlight; Golden Plovers may wait their turn to nest in suitable habitat; no bird sees more daylight during the year than the Arctic Tern; the 'structural colour' of the Kingfisher's blue; why Swallows migrate by day; the rapid changes of status of the Tree Sparrow in Ireland. Just occasionally these err on the side of the laconic: tantalising to be told that Long-eared Owls probably use their 'ear tufts' to communicate, but not why or how.

Six well-known birds—Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, Peregrine, Lapwing, Black-headed Gull and Starling—get special double-page treatment: 'the additional information shows something of the fascination that comes from studying birds in the wild'. But many spreads cover only two or three species, thus giving the artist a chance to make a habitat composition, to show a range of plumages and to slip in odd birds for comparison: for example, the cock Blackcap appears among the black-headed tits as well as in its place among the warblers.

The end-papers are used to show typical bird topographies; there is a one-page glossary of terms and a page for ornithological addresses. As might be expected from these authors, misprints are refreshingly absent and errors minimal. I was, however, slightly amused to find nesting inland by Oystercatchers described as a 'recent development': they have certainly been at it throughout my lifetime.

BRUCE CAMPBELL

African Handbook of Birds. By C. W. Mackworth-Praed and C. H. B. Grant. Longman, London & New York. Series One 1952 & 1955 (revised 1957 & 1960, reprinted 1981); Series Two 1962 & 1963 (reprinted 1981); Series Three 1970 & 1973 (reprinted 1981). £30.00 each volume.

The six volumes of this 5,063-page work are divided into three pairs. Series One covers 1,478 species in east and northeast Africa; Series Two covers 1,133 species in the southern one-third of Africa; and Series Three covers 1,371 species in west-central and west Africa. Publication spans more than 20 years, from Volume 1 of Series One in 1952 to Volume 2 of Series Three in 1973; the method of treatment is, however, remarkably consistent within the six volumes.

An average of just over one page is devoted to each species (more than 1¼ pages per species in Series One), with good cross-referencing to the colour-plates, and distribution maps in the margin. Most space is devoted to 'Distinguishing characters' and to 'Habits'. How fascinating it is for a birdwatcher used to the state of knowledge in the western Palearctic to read entries such as: 'Habits: no information', 'Nest and eggs: undescribed' and 'Call: unrecorded'. This highlighting of gaps in our knowledge is undoubtedly as great a contribution to science as is the documentation for handy reference of so much information which otherwise lies scattered in local lists or just in unpublished notebooks.

The huge number of species in Africa has necessitated the use of small illustrations and restricted the variety of plumages shown (only one for many species), and, for instance, the raptors are shown perched rather than in flight. This limits the value of these volumes for field identification, but, together with the appropriate local field guide, they make an essential part of any African ornithologist's library.

The European ornithologist will perhaps refer to these volumes most often to discover the ranges of Palearctic species which extend into or migrate to Africa or to refer to field characters of African species which stray northwards. A word of caution is needed here, since the three series are self-contained and one species may be dealt with in all three; since it is the local race (or races) which is mapped and described, the accounts can differ from one series to another and, unless care is taken, a distribution map for one race could be taken to refer to the species. Thus, despite some duplication (and occasionally triplication), most ornithologists will wish to own all six volumes.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Corrections

Pages

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 19 | BEHAVIOUR OF BLACK-WINGED STILTS Line 3 of the first paragraph on <i>Intraspecific behaviour</i> : 'Only a metre' should read 'Only a mate'. |
| 26 | EUROPEAN NEWS Bonelli's Eagle ' <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> ' should read ' <i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i> '. |
| 115 | Plate 43. '(Yuir Shibnev)' should read '(Yuri Shibnev)'. |
| 121 | IDENTIFICATION OF LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER Line 3: 'looking yellow below,' should read 'lacking yellow below,'. |
| 202 | MORTALITY OF SPARROWHAWKS AND KESTRELS Line 5 should read 'earlier for the Kestrel than for the Sparrowhawk, associated with the earlier fledging dates of Kestrels. Both adults and juveniles contributed to the spring peak in the number of Sparrowhawk carcasses received. It'. |
| 279 | Plate 95. '(Yuri Shibnev)' should read '(P. Tomkovich)'. |
| 313 | HEN HARRIERS, LONG-EARED OWLS AND SHORT-EARED OWLS IN 1978/79 Table 2: delete 'Lancashire 25 (5,6,12)'; total for 'Other English counties' should read '70'; figure for 'GRAND TOTAL' should read '587'. |
| 398 | FIELD CHARACTERS OF ISABELLINE AND BROWN SHRIKES Line 3 should read 'remains valid for those Red-backed with atypically rufous uppertail'. |
| 403 | Table 2. For the race <i>Lanius isabellinus isabellinus</i> , in 'Underparts', second sentence should read 'Females with very indistinct scaling'. |
| 405 | Line 7. Substitute 'upperparts' for 'underparts'. |
| 425 | MORTALITY OF SPARROWHAWKS AND KESTRELS Line 11 of the letter from Dr I. Newton, A. A. Bell and I. Wyllie: 'parasitic' should read 'pesticide'. |

Christmas Puzzle

As a light-hearted diversion for the Christmas holiday period, we again set our readers a small puzzle. This year the task is much more straightforward than last year's two problems.

S N F F U R N A G I M R A T P
N E O S W A L L O W R E E N O
I B R E I R R A H N E H T A T
E N I R G E R E P J A Y B S F
P I Y I E I P G A M R B L A I
I K E N O D P A S S O B U E W
N S N I N N I D M B B O E H S
S I A K I N T E O L I H T P E
T S G A H S W L G O N A I N N
A B R T I P I P Y N W A T E I
E R A V E N T E N N I L H D P
R L G C K C E N Y R W K S L L
G A N N E T O O C K O O R O A
R E O N E R W V E E R Y A G H
S T O N E L E N A R C E M A C

This 15×15 block of 225 letters contains the names of a number of bird species on the British and Irish list; the names do not include obsolete or group names (e.g. neither 'Redbreast' nor 'sandpiper' would count). The names always run in straight lines, but can go in any direction, including diagonally or backwards. Individual letters may be used once, more than once, or not at all.

You may find it helpful to encircle each name in pencil as you find it. How many species can you find? Send your answer (together with a list of them all) on a postcard to Christmas Puzzle, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. All entries will be held until 15th January 1983, when, if necessary, a draw will be made of those giving the correct answer. The winner will receive the honour of a mention in the pages of *BB*, and a small but appropriate prize.

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(D164)

BB /82

Important correction

'Handbook of the Birds of the Western Palearctic', vol. III.

In the advertisement for the third volume of the new *Handbook* (*Brit. Birds* November, page vi) the price appeared incorrectly as £45. The price should have been stated as £49.50 (as in 'British BirdShop'). Oxford University Press, publishers of the new *Handbook*, apologise for any embarrassment or inconvenience this error may have caused readers of *British Birds*. (D176)

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